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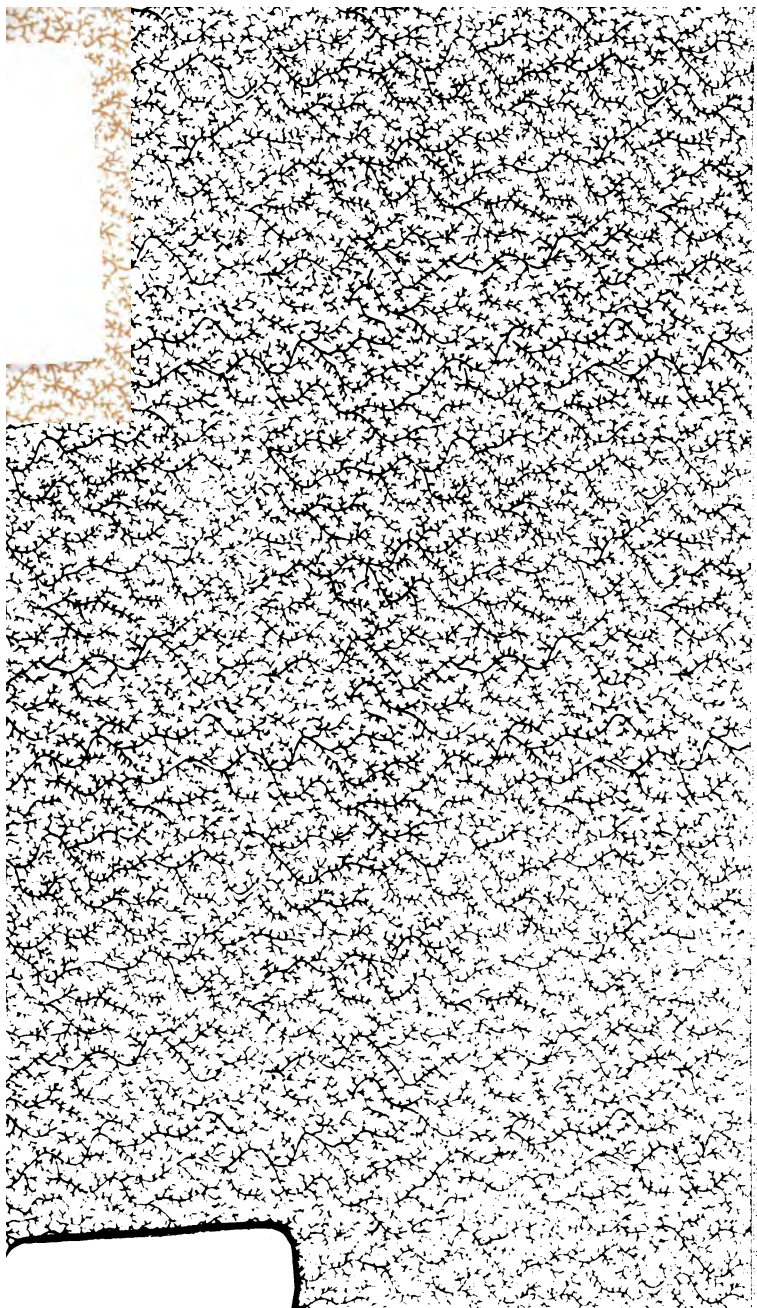
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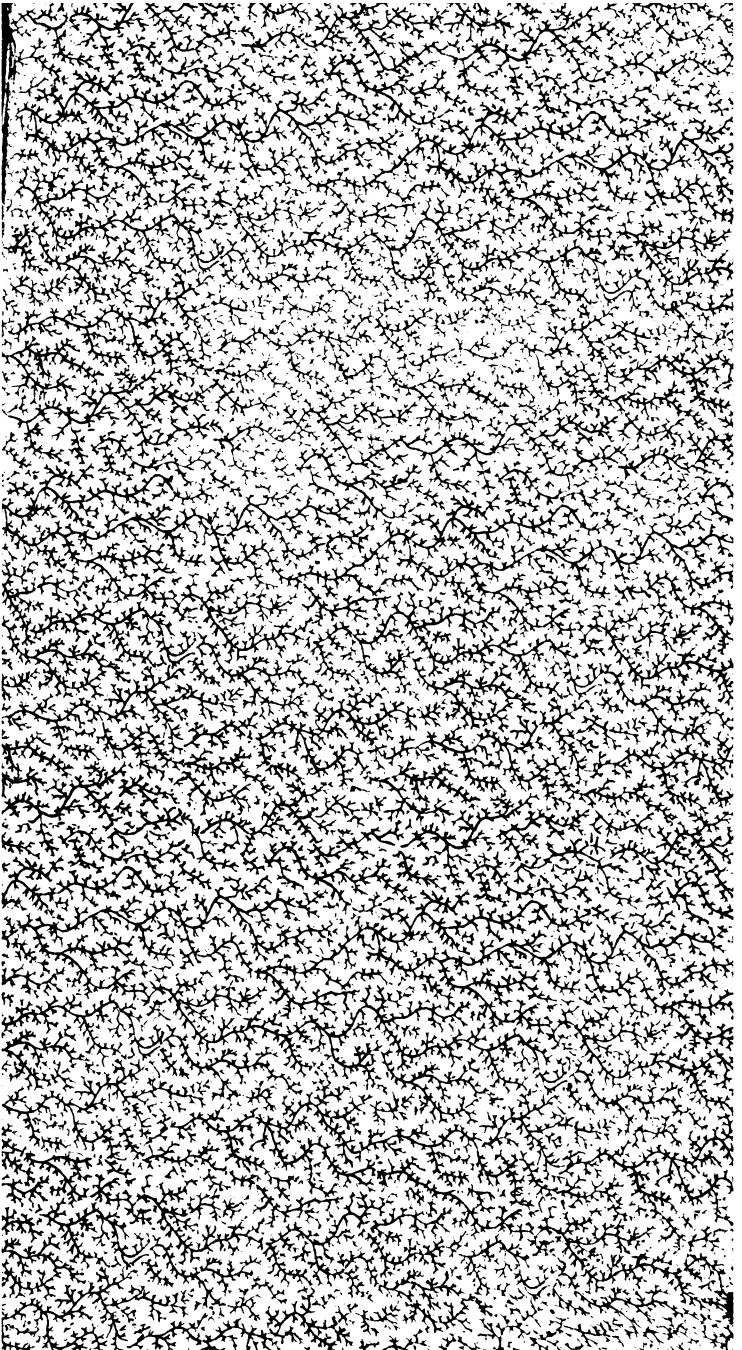
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JOHN LAW

THE PROJECTOR.

Presented by

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BOOK II.
(CONTINUED.)



COLOMBE.

VII.

HOW THE BANK PROSPERED.

AT first the scheme was treated with derision and contempt by the Duc de Noailles and the financiers who acted with him. They ridiculed the notion of founding credit, restoring trade, and paying off the national debt, with six millions—one-fourth of which only was specie, while the other three-quarters consisted of depreciated paper, which could only be realised at a loss of seventy or eighty per cent. The idea was preposterous, and must be scouted by all sensible people.

In spite, however, of these evil prognostications,

Mr. Law's Bank prospered exceedingly. The extreme regularity of its conduct, the promptitude and punctuality of its payments, and above all, the important guarantee afforded that all notes should be paid in coin of the weight and standard of the day on which the notes were issued, speedily ensured its success.

By the Regent's direction orders were given to all revenue-offices throughout the kingdom to receive the notes of the General Bank in payment of taxes, and such were the facilities offered in pecuniary transactions by these notes, that ere long they began to be preferred to specie, and passed current for one per cent. more than gold. All distrust in the Bank had by this time vanished, and given way to blind confidence. The notes became so much in demand, that a small premium was exacted on their delivery.

Moreover, Law's own anticipations of the beneficial effects which his plan would produce, were abundantly verified in the rapid and decided im-

provement that took place in every branch of trade and industry. Confidence was re-established. Foreigners began to interest themselves in the Bank, and the balance of exchange with London and Amsterdam rose to four and five per cent. in favour of Paris, the rise being sustained by Law's skilful operations. Merchants recommenced their speculations; manufactures, long suspended, were resumed; expenditure returned to its former course; and usury was effectually stopped, because a higher rate of interest than that paid by the Bank could no longer be obtained. Everything wore a bright and promising aspect, and the acme of success was reached, when, at a general meeting of the proprietors of the Bank, a dividend of fifteen per cent. per annum was declared.

This was indeed a proud day for Law. Assembled in a large hall of the ancient Hôtel de Mesmes were the whole of the proprietors of the Bank, including some of the highest and most important personages of the day. The Regent

himself was present, and was seated on a raised chair at the upper end of a long table. On his right was Law, who demonstrated very clearly and satisfactorily the prosperous condition of the Bank, dwelling on the advantages it had procured to commerce, and dilating on its brilliant prospects. His address was listened to with marked attention by the Regent, and on its conclusion, while the hall was resounding with applause, the prince observed to him, "I am determined to return to our original idea. This must be a Royal Bank, and you must be Director General."

This being precisely what Law desired, he replied that he should be ready, whenever called upon, to carry out his highness's wishes.

VIII.

THE BAL DE L'OPÉRA.

PRIOR to the Regency no balls had been given at the Opera, which then formed part of the Palais Royal, but the happy idea having occurred to the Chevalier de Bouillon to board over the pit of the theatre and raise it to a level with the stage, so as to afford a large area for dancing, the idea was acted upon, much to the Regent's satisfaction, and Opera balls became thenceforward the rage.

But it will be scarcely credited that these balls, attended by the highest nobility and other mem-

bers of a most refined and luxurious court, and by lovely women arrayed in the most exquisite toilettes, were only lighted by common candles! Yet so it was. Imagine how much the dresses must have lost in splendour, how greatly the charms of the wearers must have suffered from such miserable illumination!

Having attended one of these balls, which in all other respects was perfect, Law instantly perceived the defect, and resolved upon a remedy, but he kept his plan to himself until the opportunity arrived for its execution. This occurred when, the success of the Bank being decided, he gave a grand ball at the Opera to the Regent and the whole of the court circle.

Aware that great preparations had been made for the entertainment, the courtly company anticipated a surprise, but they were quite dazzled on entering the grand *salle de danse*, and could not help contrasting its brilliant appearance with its

previous gloomy look. Hundreds of wax tapers in crystal chandeliers replaced the dim-burning candles, producing a magical effect, and brilliantly illuminated the whole theatre, which was so abundantly festooned with roses and other flowers that it resembled a vast floral temple. The exterior of the boxes had been superbly decorated with crimson silk, and the stage represented a charming scene, designed for the occasion by Watteau. Groups of graceful young shepherds and enchanting shepherdesses, arrayed in vestments of azure silk, bedecked with ribands, and provided with silver crooks, might be seen reclining on mossy banks beneath the trees, the swains making love to the nymphs, who did not look either coy or cruel. After a while, village musicians entered on the scene, and, roused by the enlivening strains, the amorous couples rose to their feet and executed a lively pastoral dance.

Such was the ravishing spectacle that greeted

the Regent as he entered, and after gazing round for a few minutes, he turned to express his surprise and admiration of it to its originator.

“I have long thought you an enchanter, M. Law, but I am now sure of it,” he said. “This is a fairy land. My own balls are thrown completely into the shade. But do not stay with me. Go and receive the compliments of all your fair guests for the introduction of those wax-lights which let their charms be fully seen.”

Chief among the princes and nobles who honoured Mr. Law with their company on this occasion, was the Duc de Bourbon—ordinarily styled M. le Duc—a descendant of the Grand Condé, chief of the Council of Regency, and, next to the Duc d’Orléans himself, the most important person in the kingdom. With the Duc de Bourbon was the beautiful Marquise de Prie, a clever and intriguing woman, who held him in her chains. Possessing great discernment, Madame de Prie early appreciated Law’s remarkable financial

talents, and directed the duke's attention to him. Next to M. le Duc was the Prince de Conti, with whom came the Maréchal d'Estrées and the Prince de Leon. Then came five other dukes, namely, Saint-Simon, Guiche, Chaulnes, D'Antin, and La Force. All the Regent's favourites were likewise present, and a very brilliant display they made.

But we willingly turn from them to the Regent's eldest daughter, the superb Duchesse de Berri—then in the very pride of youth and beauty. Though this princess's countenance was somewhat too strongly characterised by voluptuousness, the expression accorded with her full and magnificent person. Wherever she moved, she drew all eyes upon her, as well by her noble figure as by her majestic deportment. Her diamonds were superb, and she wore the splendid earrings which had belonged to Anne of Austria. The Duchesse de Berri was accompanied by the Chevalier de Riom, to whom she was privately married, and who certainly could not have been

recommended to her notice by his good looks, since he is described by Saint-Simon as "un gros garçon, court, joufflé, pâle, qui avec force bourgeois ne ressemblait pas mal à un abcès." De Riom had something of Petruchio in his character. Acting upon the advice of his uncle, the Duc de Lauzun, who said to him, "Les filles de France veulent être menées le bâton haut," he succeeded in humbling his imperious spouse.

In the train of the proud Duchesse de Berri were her sisters, Mademoiselles de Chartres and De Valois. By some persons the first-named of these princesses was accounted the loveliest of the Regent's daughters, though she had not the superb air of her elder sister. Her features, however, were enchanting, and she had a delicate complexion, fine eyes, a slight but graceful figure, a charming mouth, and teeth like pearls. Moreover, she was an accomplished vocalist, and, though singularly soft and feminine in appearance and manner, had some masculine tastes. She rode

well, fenced skilfully, and was a perfect shot with carbine and pistol.

Mademoiselle de Valois was not a model of beauty, like her sisters, her nose being too large, and a projecting tooth interfering with the form of her mouth. But she was well proportioned, had dove-like eyes, blue tresses like threads of gold, and the ravishingly white skin generally found to accompany locks of that hue. In attendance upon this princess was the handsome and dissolute Duc de Richelieu, so celebrated for his successes, and who at that time was greatly smitten by her attractions.

As it is impossible to describe all the beautiful women who attended Mr. Law's ball, or even to enumerate them, we shall content ourselves with particularising those who, from one cause or another, attracted marked attention. Passing by, then, the young Princesse de Conti, the Princesse de Rohan, Mademoiselle de Charolois, the Duchesse de la Tremouille, the Duchesse de la Ferté, the

Marquise de Noye, Mesdames de Polignac, De Jonsac, De Gesvres, De Nesle, D'Albret, De Bouzoules, De Gacé, De la Vrillière, De Duras, and a host of others, we will come to a lovely creature who at that time was the Regent's principal favourite, the Comtesse de Parabère.

A lovely brunette, small but exquisitely proportioned, dark as a gipsy, with large, lustrous black eyes, jetty brows, and pearly teeth, Madame de Parabère had many engaging qualities, which specially attracted her royal admirer. Sprightly in manner, fond of repartee, abounding in lively sallies, she enjoyed his petit soupers, and doted upon champagne. The Regent used to call her his "little black crow."

Another charming person, who likewise held the Regent in thrall, was Madame d'Averne, and her charms served as a foil to those of her dark little rival. Madame d'Averne had blonde tresses, languishing blue eyes, an exquisitely fair skin, and a waist that could be spanned by a garter.

Her physiognomy was charming, and few could resist her captivating smiles, or the soft witchery of her glances.

A third enchanting favourite was Madame de Sabran, whose features were more regularly beautiful, more classical in form than either of those we have just endeavoured to depict. Her expression was somewhat serious, proud, and cold, and few, except those in the secret, would have suspected that the seeming prude was in reality a woman of exceedingly ardent temperament. The Duc d'Orléans having made the discovery, thought that this affected prudery lent piquancy to his liaison with her.

To the above list several others might be appended—Mademoiselles de Beurnonville and D'Estrées, for instance—but the specimens we have given may possibly suffice.

Our next sketch, if only for the sake of variety, shall not be that of a young beauty, but of an exceedingly plain elderly woman. In compliment

to Mr. Law, who stood very high in her favour, the Regent's mother, the Princess Palatine, paid him the distinction—and from *her* it was a great distinction—of being present at his ball. She was about sixty-four at this period, and was short, fat, and abominably ugly. In addition to her ugliness, Madame, as she was styled, had a very sharp tongue, and spared nobody. It may give an idea of her character to mention that when her son announced his intention of marrying Mademoiselle de Blois, she treated him to a sound box on the ear. Madame detested her daughter-in-law, who stood greatly in awe of her. She also disliked her granddaughters, especially the Duchesse de Berri, who repaid her dislike with interest, and many were the quarrels between them. But the grand object of Madame's aversion was the Abbé Dubois, and she made frequent but unavailing attempts to detach her son from him.

Among the foreign ambassadors who were present, we may select Lord Stair, and of him our

notice must be necessarily brief. This nobleman, who had previously served with distinction under William III. and the Duke of Marlborough, was a tall, handsome man, in the prime of life, being then about two-and-forty, polished in manner, a wonderful linguist, quick at surprising the secrets of others, yet never betraying his own either by word or look. The Earl of Stair gave admirable dinners, and encouraged his guests to drink freely, but never lost his self-command. Louis XIV., who had heard him extolled as a model of politeness, was resolved to put his good breeding to the proof, and desired him to step first into the royal carriage. Lord Stair obeyed without hesitation, whereupon the old monarch observed that he had not been misinformed, but that his lordship was the best-bred man he had met with. With the English ambassador came Evelyn Harcourt; but his lordship, after a few minutes, good naturedly dispensed with his secretary's attendance.

IX.

THE DUCHESS DE BERBI.

NOT sorry to be liberated, Evelyn moved about well-nigh bewildered by the beauty of the scene. The perfumed atmosphere, the sweet strains, the lights, the flowers, the ravishing loveliness and exquisite toilettes of the dancers, all combined to captivate his imagination, and produced an effect such as he had never before experienced. While feasting his eyes with the spectacle, and discovering each moment some fresh object of attraction, he approached a group of lovely women and splendidly-attired gallants, of which the superb

Duchesse de Berri constituted the centre. Struck by her resplendent charms, he could not withdraw his eyes, and the ardour of his gaze attracting her attention, she noticed him in her turn, and thinking him singularly handsome, inquired who he was from the Chevalier de Riom.

De Riom was either unable or unwilling to gratify her curiosity; but Law, who was standing near, chancing to hear the inquiry, informed her that the young gentleman in question was attached to the English embassy, and was named Evelyn Harcourt.

“With your permission I will present him to your highness,” said Law.

The duchess graciously assented, and Evelyn was accordingly introduced. It soon became evident, from the smiles she bestowed upon him, that it rested only with himself to improve the position he had obtained.

This little incident did not pass unnoticed by the Comtesse de Parabère, who was standing with the

Regent at a little distance, and now drew his attention to what was going on.

“The duchess appears to have attached a new slave to her chariot,” she remarked, “and it must be owned that her captive is very handsome. Who is he?”

The Regent could not inform her. Almost purblind, he did not recognise Evelyn, and went nearer to ascertain who he could be.

On approaching the young Englishman he recollected his features, and addressed him very affably. This condescension on his highness's part drew general attention towards the object of it, and it immediately began to be whispered about that a new favourite had appeared, who stood equally well with the Regent and the Duchesse de Berri.

The rumour appeared to receive confirmation when the beautiful duchess suddenly begged the Regent to call for a minuet, and offered her hand to Harcourt.

With a breast swelling with pride and exaltation, for which, under the circumstances, he may be pardoned, Evelyn went through the graceful dance with the princess; and, being an admirable performer, acquitted him so well that he rose materially in his lovely partner's opinion.

All the aspirants to the duchess's favour, who would have given their best blood for a smile, became envious of him—all the more susceptible among the fair sex regarded him with admiration.

While the minuet was going on, the Abbé Dubois approached the Regent, and said to him, in a low voice:

“Your highness will recollect Colombe Laborde, the girl who solicited her father's pardon from you, and obtained it. You told me you desired to see her again. She is here.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the Regent, delighted. “I have often thought of her, and have longed to behold her again. Bring her to my box. I will

go there at once, and shall await her coming with impatience."

Dubois withdrew, and the prince proceeded to his box, which was fitted up with mirrors, sofas, fauteuils, and lustres like a salon in the palace, and screened from public gaze by curtains of crimson damask. The panels were ornamented with charming paintings by Lancret and Boucher, and a more exquisite little room cannot be conceived.

Here, however, we will leave him, and return to the *salle de danse*.

By this time the minuet was over, and the beautiful duchess, who complained a little of fatigue, had been led to a seat, but she did not dismiss her partner, and they were engaged in discourse, which had almost taken a tender turn, when she observed a sudden change in Evelyn's expressive countenance, and quickly discovered that it was caused by a very beautiful young creature,

who was passing at the moment with the Abbé Dubois.

Long before this Colombe had seen Evelyn, though her presence at the ball had been unnoticed by him. With a pang which she could not repress, though she would have died rather than own it, she watched him during the dance, and perceived how completely he was fascinated by the charms of the duchess.

She was still under the influence of these painful emotions when the Abbé Dubois came up, and told her the Regent desired to see her. The summons could not be disobeyed, so she went with him, but her annoyance was increased when he led her past Harcourt and the duchess. She studiously averted her gaze from them, but her heightened colour showed how much she was affected, and when Evelyn caught sight of her, he could almost tell what was passing in her breast.

This it was that had caused the sudden change

in Evelyn's manner which had attracted the attention of the princess.

"Who is she?" she said, quickly. "You know her."

Evelyn, who had no motive for concealment, briefly explained all he knew relative to Colombe's history. The duchess seemed interested in the relation. When he had done, she said,

"Where can she be going with the Abbé Dubois?"

"They are gone to the Regent's box," observed Madame de Mouchy, one of her dames d'honneur, who overheard the inquiry.

Evelyn noticed the singular smile which accompanied this observation, and a thrill passed through his frame.

"We will follow them," said the duchess, rising.

And signing to Harcourt and Madame de Mouchy to attend her, she proceeded towards the Regent's box.

Meanwhile, Colombe and Dubois had already

arrived there. On being ushered into the little salon, Colombe was startled by finding the Regent alone, but the ease and affability of his manner restored her, and she took the seat which he offered her. Dubois remained for a few minutes, chatting in a lively manner, and helped to set her at her ease. He then made an excuse for retiring, and was bowing to the Regent, when Colombe got up and begged permission to withdraw.

“No, no—I don’t want you—stay where you are!” cried Dubois, sharply.

“I cannot possibly part with you so soon,” said the Regent, taking her hand, and detaining her.

“I entreat your highness to let me go,” cried Colombe, alarmed by the impassioned manner he had begun to assume.

Finding, however, that the Regent was deaf to her entreaties, she turned to Dubois, and said,

“I came hither under your conduct, M. l’Abbé, and I desire you to take me to the Marquise Prie, who brought me to the ball.”

Dubois replied by a mocking laugh, and was again preparing to depart, when the door opened, and the Duchesse de Berri entered, followed by Evelyn and Madame de Mouchy.

On seeing the duchess, Colombe disengaged herself from the Regent, and flew to her for protection.

“What means this intrusion, madame?” cried the Duc d’Orléans, angrily. “My orders to Picard were that no one was to be admitted.”

“Picard is not to blame. I would come in,” replied the Duchesse de Berri. “And I am very glad I did so,” she added, glancing at Colombe.

End of the Second Book.

BOOK III.



M. LABORDE.



I.

LITTLE CATHERINE LAW.

ON M. Laborde's liberation from the Conciergerie, after he had received a pardon from the Regent, the unfortunate gentleman and his daughter were brought to the Hôtel Law in the Place Vendôme, where apartments were assigned them, and everything done for their comfort.

Colombe's singular sweetness of disposition and engaging manners soon gained her the regard of Lady Catherine Law, and with her ladyship's daughter she became an especial favourite. Little

Catherine Law, indeed, quite regarded her as a sister.

After remaining with his protector until fully restored to health, Laborde, whose property had been confiscated by the Chamber of Justice, was appointed by Law, who had a very high opinion of his abilities, to an important position in the Bank. He then removed to a house in the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, but his daughter did not go with him, for little Catherine would not hear of her friend's departure. However, though Colombe did not reside with her father, they were but little separated, for she saw him every day.

Nothing, indeed, could be more agreeable than Colombe's position. Treated by Mr. Law and Lady Catherine in every respect like one of their own family, she appeared at all their entertainments, and accompanied them to the numerous fêtes and balls to which they were invited. Wherever she went, her remarkable beauty excited admiration, and many were the aspirants to

her favour, but none of them succeeded in producing any impression upon her, and for the very sufficient reason, that her heart had been given to Evelyn Harcourt. She and Evelyn often met, for the young secretary of legation was ever a welcome guest at Mr. Law's house. Little Catherine was generally present at their interviews, and with a girl's quickness soon detected their secret; and sometimes, when alone with Colombe, took a malicious pleasure in teasing her about the young Englishman.

"Don't you think him very handsome, Colombe?" she said, one day, after Evelyn's departure.

"Whom do you mean?" rejoined the other, trying to look unconscious.

"Why, Evelyn, to be sure," replied Catherine.

"I have not thought about his good looks," said Colombe; "but I know he is very amiable and very kind—and, I may add, very agreeable."

"Oh, I'm quite sure you find him agreeable,

or you wouldn't talk to him so much," cried little Catherine. "Now, to me, he appears rather dull and stupid. He never says anything that I consider amusing."

"Evelyn dull and stupid!" exclaimed Colombe; "why, he is the very contrary! How can you make such an assertion, when you were laughing all the time he was here?"

"I wanted to see whether you would defend him," rejoined Catherine. "Why, how you do blush, Colombe!"

"You make me blush by talking such nonsense," said the other. "But here is *Télémaque*, which your papa gave you yesterday. Read a chapter to me."

"You desire to change the subject," she replied, taking up the book. "But before I begin, let me ask you a question, Colombe. Would you," she continued, very deliberately—"would you, I say, like to live in London?"

"Live in London!" exclaimed Colombe, again

colouring. "I can't tell. It is a very fine city, I believe. But I never thought of living there."

"Haven't you?" cried Catherine, laughing. "Then it's time you did. Evelyn Harcourt lives in London."

"A truce to this nonsense," said Colombe. "Let me hear what good advice Mentor gave Télémaque."

Upon this, little Catherine opened the book, and with a demure countenance pretended to read as follows: "'My son,' said Mentor, 'when you design to take a wife, seek her not in Ithaca, but in Thrace—that is to say, not in London, but in Paris. Place yourself under my guidance, and I will conduct you to the dwelling—papa's hôtel in the Place Vendôme, no doubt—where resides a nymph, who, of all her sex, is best calculated to make you happy.' I think some one else, besides the discreet son of Ulysses, would do well to follow Mentor's advice. Eh, Colombe?" she added, archly.

“Shut up the book directly, if you please, mademoiselle,” said Colombe, with a stately look.

From the foregoing it will be inferred that little Catherine had a tolerably clear perception as to how matters stood between Evelyn and Colombe.

All went on swimmingly between the young pair until the Opera ball, at which Colombe was a witness of the fascination exercised over her lover by the resistless Duchesse de Berri. How it chanced that Colombe was brought to this ball by the Marquise de Prie we must now explain. The marchioness was a great gambler in the funds, and being in the habit of consulting Law about her speculations, often called at his house in the Place Vendôme. On one of these occasions she saw Colombe, and being much taken by her beauty, insisted upon carrying her off for a short visit to the palace of the Duc de Bourbon, at Chantilly. Had it been possible, Colombe would have declined the invitation, but seeing that Lady Catherine wished her to go, she

assented. During her stay at Chantilly the ball occurred, and she was brought to it by Madame de Prie, and unluckily became a witness of Evelyn's subjugation by the Duchesse de Berri. With what followed the reader is acquainted. We may add, that after the opportune entrance of the Duchesse de Berri into the Regent's box, the terrified girl was taken back by Evelyn to Madame de Prie. Both were too much embarrassed at the time for any explanation to be possible between them, and indeed nothing but the peculiar circumstances in which she was placed would have induced Colombe to accept Evelyn's arm. As they were moving on through the brilliant crowd he attempted to say a few words in exculpation of his conduct, but receiving no reply, he became silent in his turn, and when they reached Madame de Prie he was dismissed with a formal curtsey by Colombe.

Colombe did not return to Chantilly after the ball, but pleading sudden indisposition, was left in

the Place Vendôme. Next day she was really ill, her feelings having sustained a shock from which she did not immediately recover. But she kept her grief to herself.

Struck by her change of manner towards Evelyn, and unable to account for it, little Catherine did not fail to ask the cause, but received no satisfactory solution.

“You used to like Evelyn once, Colombe,” remarked the little girl. “What has he done to offend you? Poor fellow! he seems very much hurt. I’m quite sorry for him. Forgive him, and make it up.”

“I’m not offended with M. Harcourt, Kate, and have nothing to forgive.”

“Don’t tell stories, Colombe. If you weren’t displeased with him, you wouldn’t call him *Monsieur* Harcourt. You never did so till lately. Why have you become so formal all at once? Come now, tell me what it’s all about. Can’t I set it right?”

“ Well, perhaps I’m not altogether pleased with him. But I have no right to complain of anything he has done.

“ That’s as much as owning yourself in the wrong, Colombe. May I tell Evelyn what you say?”

“ On no account,” cried Colombe, decidedly.

Little Catherine made several other attempts to bring about a reconciliation between them, but all were equally unsuccessful. Perhaps Colombe might have been moved by her lover’s apparent contrition, if her feelings of jealousy had not been again roused. A grand entertainment was given at the Luxembourg by the Duchesse de Berri, at which Lady Catherine and Mr. Law were present, and on the morning after the fête little Catherine rushed into her friend’s room in a state of great excitement to tell her that Evelyn had been at the Luxembourg.

“ That doesn’t surprise me,” said Colombe, coldly. “ I felt sure he would be there.

“ Ah! but it will surprise you to hear what an effect he produced. Madame la Duchesse de Berri danced with him twice. If you had been there, you might have seen them.”

“ I’m glad I didn’t go,” muttered Colombe, turning very pale.

“ I have something more to tell you about him and the duchess, which will greatly amuse you,” said Catherine. “ Mamma told me——”

“ Pray spare me any further details,” cried Colombe, checking her. “ I have already explained to you that I no longer take any interest in M. Harcourt, and would rather not hear about him. If he is so much admired by great ladies, and such a favourite as you represent with the Duchesse de Berri, I hope he will confine his attentions to them, so that we may see less of him in future.”

“ I never heard you make such an ill-natured remark before, Colombe. I do believe you are jealous.”

"I jealous!" exclaimed the other, colouring. "Have I not just told you I am perfectly indifferent to M. Harcourt? It matters nothing to me how much he is admired, or by whom."

"I suspect it matters a great deal more than you are willing to confess," rejoined Catherine. "But I won't tease you any more," she added, seeing the tears spring to Colombe's eyes. "I think you are quite right not to care for Evelyn, and if I were in your place, I would do just the same. I won't take his part any more. You shall see how I will treat him when he next appears. I'll tell him we don't desire his company, and that he had better go to the great ladies and the duchess."

"You mustn't do anything of the kind, you silly child," cried Colombe, smiling through her tears.

"But I will," said Catherine.

On that very day Evelyn presented himself, and was received with her customary kindness by Lady

Catherine Law, who, unconscious of the mischief she was doing, immediately launched out into praises of the Duchesse de Berri, and was dilating upon the splendour of her attire, when Colombe arose, and quitted the room. Scarcely was she gone, and the duchess once more brought on the tapis, than little Catherine likewise got up, and, imitating Colombe's manner as closely as she could, moved towards the door, and would have gone out if her mamma had not called her back. Compelled to remain, she took up *Télémaque*, feigning to be profoundly interested in its perusal, and when Evelyn concluded his visit, would not even raise her eyes to bid him adieu; for which piece of misconduct she was very properly reprov'd by Lady Catherine.

Next day, Evelyn called again, and finding little Catherine by herself, he produced a note, and begged her to convey it without delay to Colombe, and, if possible, bring him an answer. Enchanted

to be thus employed, little Catherine flew off instantly, but returned with a very different expression of countenance.

“Well, what answer do you bring me?” he cried.

“This,” she replied, giving him back the billet he had confided to her.

“My own note unopened!” he exclaimed. “Did she refuse to read it?”

“Yes,” returned Catherine; “and she begs you won’t trouble yourself to write again, as all your letters will be returned in the same way.”

“But do go back to her, dear Kate, and implore her to grant me a word—only one word,” he cried.

“It’s of no use, I tell you, sir,” replied the little girl. “She won’t come.”

“Will you engage to deliver a message to her, Kate?”

“I can’t promise. What is it?”

"Tell her she is entirely mistaken if she supposes I have been inconstant; and though appearances are against me, I swear——"

"Well, what do you swear?"

"That I have never for a single moment swerved from my allegiance to her."

"I suppose you said all that in your note?"

"All that, and a great deal more."

"So Colombe thought, and therefore refused to read it. I'm sorry I can't deliver your message."

After this signal failure, Evelyn did not make another attempt. He began to discontinue his visits, and instead of appearing daily, as he used to do, seldom called more than once a week. This state of things endured for some time, and there appeared little prospect of accommodating matters. So far from being closed, the breach was widened. Colombe was informed that Evelyn had become quite the rage at the Regent's court, that he mingled in all its gaieties, and participated in its

dissipations. This statement, the correctness of which she did not in the least doubt, confirmed her in the determination of banishing him from her affections.

But she did not find the task easy of accomplishment. Evelyn's hold upon her heart was too firm to be dislodged.

II.

MONSIEUR NICOMÈDE COSSARD.

WHILE all this was going on, M. Laborde seemed in a fair way of retrieving his fortunes. Owing, to the opportunities afforded by his position in the bank, and the confidence placed in him by his patron, he managed to make several lucky hits, and was growing rich rapidly. He had now but one thought, that of becoming wealthy. The greed of gain took entire possession of his breast. Next to acquiring money himself, his grand desire was to marry his daughter to a man of large capital.

And he was lucky enough to find the very person he sought.

One of the principal shareholders in the Bank, and a director into the bargain, was M. Nicomède Cossard. He had been an army-victualler in the previous reign, and had amassed a large sum of money, the greater part of which, by means of a heavy bribe to Madame de Parabère, he had contrived to save from the clutches of the Chamber of Justice. M. Nicomède Cossard was of course too important a person to be neglected by Law, and he had been invited on several occasions to the great banker's residence in the Place Vendôme, where he beheld Mademoiselle Laborde, and became captivated by her beauty. He caused himself to be presented to her, and was as much pleased by her manner as by her personal attractions. In a matter of so much moment as marriage, M. Cossard was in no hurry in coming to a decision—in fact, he had hitherto been rather averse to matrimony—but at last he made up his mind, and one

day while at the Bank he went into Laborde's room and broached the subject to him. There was no necessity to explain his circumstances. With these M. Laborde was sufficiently acquainted. Would he give him his daughter? If so, he, Nicomède, would make a very large marriage-settlement upon her. Delighted with the proposal, Laborde did not take long to consider, but declared the alliance would give him the greatest possible satisfaction, and, so far as they were concerned, the transaction was there and then concluded. Persuaded that the marriage-settlement he proposed to make upon her would influence Colombe as strongly as it evidently did her father, M. Cossard entertained no misgivings as to the issue of the negotiation. Neither did Laborde for a moment dream of opposition on Colombe's part to his will. It was therefore with full expectation of arranging the affair according to his wishes that he sought a private conversation with her next morning. His first object was to dispose of Evelyn,

so he began by deploring the young man's strong tendency to gallantry, when Colombe checked him by saying:

"I must beg you not to speak of M. Harcourt, papa. I no longer take any interest in him."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," he replied, "for he was the only difficulty in the way of the proposition I am about to make to you. He is a very charming young man, M. Harcourt, and I shall ever feel indebted to him for the service he has rendered me, but I don't think he would suit you as a husband."

"If I ever thought of him in such a light, I have long since abandoned the idea," replied Colombe, turning pale. "And I am quite sure he has ceased to think of me."

"So it would appear—so it would appear," said Laborde, shaking his head. "If he did care for you, he couldn't make love to twenty other women, as I hear he does. Had he persevered in his suit, I should have considered it my duty, as a prudent

father, to reject him. But to the point. I have an offer of marriage for you."

"An offer of marriage, papa!" exclaimed Colombe, starting.

"A highly advantageous offer," pursued her father; "and from a gentleman the very reverse of Evelyn, who would have been certain to neglect you, and render you miserable by his infidelities—a gentleman in all respects calculated to make you happy—not, perhaps, handsome, or even young, though far from old, but possessing what is infinitely better than youth or good looks—immense wealth. A millionaire, in fact. Disposed, moreover, to gratify all your wishes, however boundless they may be—to lodge you as sumptuously as Miladi Law herself is lodged—to provide you with a retinue of servants equal to miladi's—with carriages as grand as hers—with diamonds as splendid as those she wears—and, in a word, place you upon an equality with her."

"I have no such extravagant desires as these,

papa," Colombe replied. "It would not gratify me to call a grand hotel like this my own. I do not want diamonds, rich dresses, carriages, and a host of lacqueys. Such things yield me no happiness. As at present circumstanced, I have far too many luxuries and enjoyments."

"I expected a very different answer from you," said her father, somewhat taken aback, "and must own I am disappointed by your want of spirit. I thought when you married you would like to live in splendid style—to emulate Miladi Law, and the wives of other great financiers. However, I dare say the husband I design for you will accommodate himself to your wishes, whatever they may be."

"And pray who is the husband you design for me, papa? You have not told me his name. Do I know him? have I seen him?"

"You have seen him often in this house, at which he is a frequent visitor, and are slightly acquainted with him. But it is quite possible he

may not have produced such an impression on you as you have on him."

"Do tell me who it is, papa? I cannot possibly guess."

"It is the great army-victualler — the great capitalist, M. Nicomède Cossard," replied her father, giving all the importance he could to the announcement. To his surprise and mortification Colombe burst into a laugh.

"What! that short, stout, ugly old man?" she cried. "You can't possibly mean M. Cossard, whom little Catherine Law calls M. Nez-Camus, from his excessively flat nose. Why, he is nearly as old as you are, papa. Surely you can't wish me to marry *him*?"

"Pardon, mademoiselle," returned her father, frowning awfully, "I *do* wish to marry you to M. Nicomède Cossard, and in this case my will is law. I have promised you to him, and mean to keep my word. If M. Cossard is not very hand-

some, and not very young, and his nose is somewhat flatter than ordinary, he does not deserve ridicule. He has a thousand good qualities which ought to recommend him to you. I need not ~~enumerate~~ them, but will sum them up in a word by saying he is immensely wealthy."

"I don't doubt what you say, papa, about M. Cossard's excellent qualities, but I really cannot prevail upon myself to marry him."

"Take care, mademoiselle. I repeat, that I have given my word that the marriage shall take place. Permit me also to observe, that feeling certain I was making the best arrangement possible for you, I did not think it necessary to consult your inclinations."

"But, dear papa, you cannot desire to make me miserable?"

"Miserable! certainly not, my dear child. In providing you with an amiable, wealthy husband, anxious to gratify your inclinations, I can scarcely

be charged with such a design. Hear me, Colombe. I have set my heart upon this marriage. It *must* take place."

"But, papa, I cannot give M. Cossard the affection he is entitled to. I can scarcely think of him without contempt. I should deceive him were I to marry him."

"Make yourself quite easy on that score, my dear child. M. Cossard is not too exacting. He only bargains for a young and lovely wife, and doesn't stipulate for affection."

"But I can't sell myself thus, papa—I won't!" she cried.

"Why this extraordinary vivacity, mademoiselle? Am I to understand you have some attachment of which I have been kept in ignorance?"

"You have been aware of the only attachment I ever had, papa," she replied. "And that"—and she hesitated—"is quite over."

"Such being the case—and I must reiterate my satisfaction that the silly affair is completely

at an end—there can be nothing to prevent the proposed marriage with M. Cossard. Evelyn Harcourt, I may now say it, has behaved very badly to you, has slighted you for others, and you will take a very proper revenge upon him. He will then estimate aright the prize he has lost.”

“In seeking such revenge, I should wound myself far more deeply than I should wound Evelyn,” she rejoined, sorrowfully. “He never thought me a prize, or he would not have cast me away so quickly.”

“He had no right to trifle with your affections,” cried her father, sharply. “But let us say no more about him. I can quite understand your distaste to the proposed match. But believe me it will be for the best. Very few marry the object of their affections, and those who do generally repent the step. Take my word for it, the happiest couples are those who are richest. If they are not, it is their own fault, since they have every material of happiness. This material, in the

greatest abundance, I have provided for you. You may begin with indifference for Nicomède—dislike, if you please—but before many months you will deem him a model of a husband, and be the envy of all your acquaintance.”

“I shall never be able to endure him, papa. I cannot go to the altar with him.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed her father. “Such scruples are simply ridiculous. Leave all responsibility to me, who counsel and enjoin the step.”

“I implore you not to insist upon my compliance, papa. If you do, you will drive me to despair.”

“Pooh! this is mere silly talk. I shall tell Nicomède you consent.”

“Oh no, no, no! I beseech you not!”

“I will bring him to you at this hour to-morrow. If you value my regard, you will receive him properly.”

“I will endeavour to obey you, papa, but——”

“Don’t compel me to use stronger language,

Colombe. I have your best interests in view. Be satisfied of that. Ere long you will thank me."

"I fear you yourself may regret this undue exertion of your authority, papa," she replied. "Give me a little time for consideration, and perhaps I may overcome my repugnance to M. Cossard. I will try to do so—indeed I will."

"Unluckily, it does not rest with me to grant your request. Nicomède requires an immediate decision, and were I to ask for time, would inevitably fly off, and the affair would come to an end."

"Then act as you please, papa," she said, in a tone of resignation. "I am prepared to obey."

"You are a dear, good, dutiful child," he cried, tenderly embracing her. "Perhaps, under some pretext, I may obtain a month's delay from Nicomède. At all events, I will try. But if I do this, you must promise me—solemnly promise—not to enter into any engagement, without my knowledge or consent, with Evelyn."

“Such a promise is wholly unnecessary, papa,” she replied, “but I readily give it.”

“To-morrow you will receive Nicomède in the character of a suitor?”

“That is more difficult to perform than the other. However, I consent.”

“Enough!” cried Laborde. “I am perfectly content with you, my child. I fully appreciate the sacrifice you are willing to make for me. But you will have your reward. And now let us go to Lady Catherine’s boudoir.”

As they were quitting the room, little Catherine rushed in.

“Oh, Colombe,” she cried, “Evelyn Harcourt has just been here, and wanted so much to see you. I told him you were engaged with your papa, but that didn’t satisfy him. He begged and implored me to take a message to you, but I wouldn’t comply.”

“Is he gone?” exclaimed Colombe, scarcely able to conceal her agitation.

"Yes, he's gone," replied the little girl. "But he said he would call to-morrow morning, when he *must* see you. He bade me tell you so."

"I wish I had seen him!" cried Colombe, unable to maintain her firmness.

"Have I done wrong?—ought I to have come to you?" cried little Catherine. "I felt inclined to do so, he was so very urgent, but I fancied you might be vexed."

"Say no more—say no more, I beg of you," cried Colombe.

While little Catherine was gazing at her with a look of perplexity and distress, Laborde took leave of his daughter, saying, as he quitted the room,

"I don't forbid you to see Evelyn to-morrow, my child, but remember your promise to me."

"I shall not fail," rejoined Colombe.

"What promise have you given, Colombe?" inquired the little girl.

"Oh! nothing it concerns you to know," was the reply.

"You won't trust me, Colombe," cried Kate, reproachfully.

"I can't trust you, darling."

"You might," still more reproachfully.

"Well, then, I will; but not now."

"Why not now?"

"Don't ask. Be content. You will know all soon enough."

III.

HOW COLOMBE WAS INDUCED TO ACCEPT M. NICOMÈDE
COSSARD.

POOR Colombe was cruelly disappointed. In spite of all he had said to little Catherine about his urgent desire for an interview, Evelyn did not appear next morning, nor was any message received from him, and Colombe was still in a state of extreme agitation and suspense, momentarily expecting his arrival, when the death-blow was given to her hopes by a note which she received from her father.

“I pity you sincerely, my poor child,” wrote

Laborde, "but you have been indulging a very foolish passion for a very unworthy person, as you cannot fail to acknowledge when I tell you I have just ascertained that Evelyn is gone to La Muette, in the Bois de Boulogne, to attend a hunting-party given by Madame la Duchesse de Berri. With such irresistible attraction before him, it is not surprising he should break his appointment with you. But I hope you will know how to resent such conduct, and replace a faithless lover by one prepared to prove his devotion to you. This note will serve as Nicomède's avant-courier."

"My father is right!" exclaimed Colombe, as she perused these lines. "Cost what it may, I must tear Evelyn's image from my breast. If he loved me—if he desired to see me—he would have disobeyed the summons of that royal syren. But he is false, and I should indeed be wanting in spirit if I did not resent his perfidy."

"What does your papa tell you in that letter,

Colombe?" inquired little Catherine, who had watched her read it.

"He tells me Evelyn is gone to a hunting-party given by Madame la Duchesse de Berri, so of course I must not expect him. My mind is quite made up."

"To do what?"

"To obey papa—to marry M. Nicomède Cos-sard."

"I hope you won't be sorry for it. Evelyn, I am sure, would make a much nicer husband than old M. Nez-Camus."

"If you love me, Kate, don't allude to Evelyn again."

"Well, I'll try not—but I never felt so much inclined to take his part before. I wish you had seen him yesterday, Colombe."

"If I had, it would have made no difference."

"Yes it would—all might have been arranged."

"And to-day there would have been a fresh

rupture. No, it is better as it is. An impassable barrier shall be placed between us."

At this moment, a lacquey in gorgeous livery entered to announce M. Laborde and M. Nicomède Cossard.

"Ah! I hope I shall be able to go through with it!" ejaculated Colombe, feeling her strength suddenly desert her.

"May I stop in the room with you?" entreated Catherine.

"Yes, do, by all means," replied Colombe.

At this moment the two gentlemen entered, and Laborde formally presented Nicomède to his daughter, who, scarcely able to control her agitation, curtsied deeply in reply to the bow addressed to her by the army-victualler. M. Cossard's appearance was certainly not very prepossessing. In age he was about fifty, perhaps rather more. In stature short, with a goodly rotundity of paunch, stout legs, and little feet. A very flat nose, a long upper lip, and a very long and cun-

ning chin, imparted a comical look to his fat, pasty face. However, he made the best of himself, being magnificently attired in sky-blue velvet. He also wore a vast well-powdered peruke, lace of the finest kind on his cravat and ruffles, diamonds on his knees, buckles, and sword-hilt, and caused his legs to look twice as large as they were in reality by casing them in cream-coloured silk hose. But in spite of his rich attire, his personal appearance so ill accorded with the character he assumed, that little Catherine immediately began to titter, and could scarcely refrain from laughing outright.

“Let us leave them together for a moment, my dear,” said Laborde to the little girl.

“Yes, I’ll come,” she replied. “You mustn’t marry that ridiculous old fright,” she whispered to Colombe. And with this piece of counsel, she followed Laborde to the farther end of the room.

“You seem agitated, mademoiselle,” observed Nicomède, who, notwithstanding his absurd ap-

pearance, was by no means a bad hearted fellow. "Am I to understand that my suit is disagreeable to you? If so, I will at once retire."

Colombe felt half inclined to throw herself upon his compassion, but the presence of her father, who was closely watching her, restrained her.

Finding she made no reply, with an absurd air of gallantry, which again excited little Catherine's merriment, Nicomède took her cold, trembling hand, and pressed his great thick lips to it. Colombe shuddered at the contact.

"As yet we are almost strangers to each other, mademoiselle," said Nicomède, "but I flatter myself you will like me more as you know me better. It shall be the study of my life to please you, and I doubt not I shall succeed."

After indulging in a rhapsody about her beauty and his own devotion, he threw himself at Colombe's feet, almost convulsing little Catherine with laughter. In fact, his appearance was so ridiculous in this posture, that Colombe herself could

not repress a smile. Feeling, however, the necessity of putting an end to the scene, she begged him to rise, and as he was unable to do so unassisted, helped him to his feet. Greatly embarrassed by the exhibition he made, and by little Catherine's laughter, Nicomède would have beaten a retreat, if he could have done so creditably. But this being impossible, he signed to Laborde, who instantly flew to his relief.

"I am afraid I am a very maladroit lover, mademoiselle," said Nicomède, "but your good nature will excuse me."

"My daughter will readily dispense with all the ceremonies usual on these occasions," interposed Laborde. "All that is necessary is, that you should come to a distinct understanding."

"And that I believe we have arrived at," said Nicomède, reassured by Laborde's presence. "I am accepted, eh, mademoiselle?"

"I have already given you my hand, sir," she replied.

“But not your heart; can you not give me that?”

“Don’t press her too much just now,” whispered Laborde. “Her heart will be yours in due time.”

“Nobody has a heart now-a-days,” cried little Catherine, “therefore nobody can give one away. It is extremely bad taste in you, sir, to ask Colombe for what she hasn’t got—positively bourgeois.”

“I bow to the correction,” replied Nicomède. “If nobody has a heart, I certainly can’t expect one. But from my own feelings I fancy I must be an exception to the rule. I admit the impropriety of my request, mademoiselle,” he added to Colombe, “and apologise for it. All I desire is an assurance on your part——”

“That you’ve already got, my good friend,” interrupted Laborde. “Be content—pray be content.”

“I merely wish to be satisfied I’m not disagree-

able," persisted Nicomède. "Am I disagreeable, mademoiselle?"

"How can you ask such a silly question, sir?" interposed Catherine. "If I were Colombe, I'd tell you the truth."

"I advise you to ask no more questions," said Laborde. "My daughter accepts you, that is all you require."

"But let me have one word from your own lips—a single word, Colombe," said Nicomède, venturing to take her hand. "You agree to be my wife?"

"I do," she replied, in a low, faint voice.

"Enough!" cried Nicomède, rapturously.

"Oh dear! I wish you hadn't uttered those words," exclaimed Catherine.

"All being now satisfactorily settled, it is unnecessary to prolong the interview," said Laborde. "I have business at the Bank which must be attended to. Excuse me for hurrying you away, my dear son-in-law that is to be. Minor matters can be arranged hereafter."

“Adieu, mademoiselle,” said Nicomède. “I shall have the honour of waiting upon you at this hour to-morrow.”

Colombe tried to say she would be happy to see him, but her lips refused utterance to the words, and Nicomède was preparing to depart, when the door opened, and Evelyn Harcourt, unannounced, entered the room.

Attired in a riding-habit of green velvet, richly embroidered with gold, and high boots, he made a very gallant appearance, and offered an extraordinary contrast to Cossard. Without noticing any one else, he marched straight up to Colombe.

“I should have been here two hours ago,” he said to her, “but I was invited by the Regent to breakfast at La Muette, and could not disobey. But I left the royal hunting-party in the Bois de Boulogne, and rode hither as fast as my horse could carry me.”

“Would you had come two hours ago, Evelyn!”

said Colombe, in a low voice. "This might then have been avoided."

"This avoided!" exclaimed Evelyn, looking round uneasily. "What has happened? Who is that person with your father?"

"That person," said Colombe—"that person is—I cannot, cannot tell you."

"But I will," interposed Catherine. "That person, M. Nicomède Cossard, is to be her husband. She has just accepted him."

"Colombe, this is not true?—Unsay it! unsay it!" cried Evelyn, despairingly.

"It is true," she rejoined.

"I shall go mad!" cried Evelyn. "Why, I am come to ask your hand in marriage."

"You are too late!" cried Colombe.

And she would have fallen to the ground if he had not caught her in his arms.

End of the Third Book.



BOOK IV.



THE COMPAGNIE D'OCCIDENT.

I.

HOW THE DUC DE NOAILLES AND THE CHANCELLOR D'AGUES-
SEAU RESIGNED OFFICE; AND HOW M. D'ARGENSON BE-
CAME CHIEF OF THE COUNCIL OF FINANCE, AND KEEPER
OF THE SEALS.

DURING the year and a half following its institution, Mr. Law's Bank continued to rise in credit and importance, and was constantly extending its operations. Received as cash at all the public offices, its notes were eagerly sought after, and preferred to specie—thus realising Law's prognostications. Moreover, the large deposits of gold and silver continually made at the Bank, under the eye of the public, removed all doubts as to the

solvency of the establishment. Distrust, in fact, had long since disappeared, and given way to the blindest confidence. In eighteen months, Mr. Law had changed the whole aspect of affairs, had immensely increased the circulation, restored credit, revived trade, and given a new and strong impulse to every kind of industry.

Completely fascinated by Law, the Regent abandoned himself to his guidance in all financial matters, aided the Bank by edicts expressly designed to extend its operations and sustain its credit, and would long ere this have placed the entire control of the finances in his favourite's hands, if Law had not been a foreigner and a heretic, and incapable, therefore, of holding office in the government.

France, at the period in question, had large possessions in America. Not only did the whole state of Louisiana belong to her, but she owned the enormous region watered by the Mississippi and its confluent rivers. Some thirty-seven years

previously, a celebrated traveller, the Chevalier La Salle, had obtained from Louis XIV. the privilege of exploring and colonising this then unknown and savage country. After connecting the great lakes by a chain of forts, the intrepid colonist descended the Mississippi to its embouchure in the Gulf of Mexico, being the first to accomplish the hazardous voyage, and, taking possession of the country he had traversed, as representative of his sovereign, he bestowed upon it the musical name of Louisiana. But La Salle did not reap the reward of his discovery, being treacherously murdered, and his infant colony disappeared. During the continuance of the war that prevailed for many subsequent years, no fresh attempt was made to colonise Louisiana, the English cruisers, by their activity, cutting off all trade with this portion of America; but peace being established in 1712, Antoine Crozat, an enterprising merchant, who had enriched himself by great maritime speculations, purchased from the king the exclusive right of trading

with Louisiana for fifteen years. Large sums were expended by Crozat and his company, vessels fitted out, and free passages given to intending colonists; but the gigantic scheme failed, and threatened to become ruinous to its bold originator, who, however, contrived to liberate himself from further responsibility by relinquishing his monopoly to the Duc de Noailles and the Chamber of Justice.

But the acquisition so far from being serviceable to the Council of Finance, embarrassed them greatly. They did not dare to prosecute Crozat's colonial schemes. While debating the matter, it occurred to the Duc de Noailles that he might get rid of the difficulty, and gratify his revenge at the same time, by offering the ruinous monopoly to Law, who might possibly fall into the snare, and accept it. After consulting with the Chancellor D'Aguesseau, who shared his dislike of the great Scottish financier, and who had vehemently op-

posed the Regent's design of taking the Bank into his own hands, it was decided that it would be safest to make the proposition through his highness, since, if he favoured the project, Law would be certain to adopt it. Accordingly, Noailles and the chancellor had a private interview with the Regent, who seemed greatly pleased with their proposition, and enjoined their attendance on the following day, when Law could be present to receive the offer. Satisfied that their point was gained, the two wily ministers withdrew.

Next day, at the appointed hour, they were ushered into the Regent's cabinet. Besides Law, whom they expected to meet, there were present the Abbé Dubois and Antoine Crozat.

Of late the Regent's manner had been somewhat cold towards both ministers—strong suspicions, almost amounting to certainty, of their disloyalty to him having been roused in his breast by certain revelations of Dubois—but on this oc-

casion his deportment towards them was particularly gracious and affable.

At once addressing himself to the matter in hand, his highness informed them that he had mentioned to the Sieur Law their proposal to cede to him the monopoly of the trade to Louisiana, but had forborne to employ any arguments to influence his decision.

Thanking his highness for the interest he had taken in the affair, the Duc de Noailles turned to Law and said, "I trust his highness has told you, M. Law, what I asserted yesterday, and what I now repeat, that no one is so capable of conducting this great commercial enterprise as yourself; and the Council of Finance feel that in making a concession of the monopoly to you, they will ensure the success of a project which must prove in the highest degree advantageous to the kingdom. That this large portion of the New World, which possesses lakes like inland seas, an enormous river flowing into the Gulf of Mexico,

mountains abounding with precious metals, plains covered with forests, prairies of extraordinary fertility — that such a country, boasting such immense natural advantages, must, if colonised, yield incalculable results, we do not doubt; and though the undertaking has proved too much for your predecessor, M. Crozat, we are confident it will not prove too much for you.”

“I am clearly of opinion,” added D’Aguesseau, “that it is reserved for the Sieur Law to accomplish the great work commenced by the unfortunate Chevalier La Salle, and continued by the enterprising gentleman,” bowing to Crozat, “whom I see before me.”

“I am flattered by the terms in which you speak of me,” observed Law, “but it would be presumption on my part to hope for success where one so skilful and enterprising as M. Crozat has failed.”

“I laboured under many disadvantages, M. Law, which you, who enjoy his highness’s support, will

not experience," said Crozat. "But I never despaired of ultimate success."

"I would appeal to M. Crozat, who can now give an unbiased opinion upon the matter," said Noailles, "whether in describing Louisiana I have exaggerated its colonial advantages."

"On the contrary, M. le Duc, you have understated them," replied Crozat. "It is not possible to over-estimate the natural wealth of Louisiana. When a city shall be built at the mouth of the Mississippi; and when the country through which that mighty river flows shall be colonised, incalculable wealth will accrue to France. Such is my firm conviction, and while lamenting that I have lacked the power to carry out my own scheme, I shall rejoice if it falls into abler hands."

"You compliment me too much, M. Crozat," said Law. "But since you have relinquished the scheme, it must be carried out, and as I feel as strongly as yourself the enormous advantage to this country of a colony like that of Louisiana, I

will unhesitatingly undertake the onerous task. I will build a beautiful city at the mouth of the Mississippi, and will call it, after the illustrious Regent of France, New Orléans. To carry out my great design I will forthwith establish a company, to be styled the *Compagnie d'Occident*, with a capital of a hundred millions, divided into two hundred thousand shares of five hundred livres each, payable in *billets d'état*."

"While I am delighted with your acceptance of our offer, M. Law, and very favourably impressed by your plan of the *Compagnie d'Occident*," remarked Noailles, "I may be permitted to observe, that there being now a loss of seventy per cent. on the *billets d'état*, the actual payment for each share will be only one hundred and fifty livres, not five hundred. However, that is your affair."

"So long as four per cent. is regularly paid by the Treasury on the *billets d'état*, I shall not care for the deficit you mention, M. le Duc," rejoined

Law. "But I will engage not only to absorb one hundred millions of these notes in the *Compagnie d'Occident*, but to raise the surplus to par."

"What say you to that, duke?" demanded the Regent, laughing.

"Mere fanfaronade," muttered Noailles, shrugging his shoulders.

"I will only say that if the *Sieur Law* can accomplish such a feat, he will deserve a statue," observed *D'Aguesseau*.

"And he shall have one, and in the finest place in Paris," rejoined the Regent.

"And now, *M. Law*," pursued his highness, addressing him, "since you have accepted the offer made you by the Council of Finance, and have explained your views, I promise you, on the part of his Majesty, letters patent in the form of an edict, which shall empower you to establish a great commercial company, under the denomination proposed by yourself, of the *Compagnie d'Occident*. And in consideration of the services which his

Majesty anticipates you will render to France by the *Compagnie d'Occident*, he will accord you for twenty-five years the exclusive right of trading with Louisiana, will engage to maintain freedom of commerce and navigation to your company, and protect it by force of arms, if need be, against all nations that may seek to interfere with it."

"Indeed, monseigneur! — this is much — too much!" exclaimed *D'Aguesseau*.

"Furthermore," pursued the Regent, without deigning to notice the chancellor's remark, "in order to encourage the *Compagnie d'Occident*, his Majesty will confer upon it the exclusive privilege of trading in the furs of Canada, will diminish in its favour the custom-house dues, and grant a large premium to each of its ships which shall sail for the first time to one of its ports."

"Is this all, monseigneur?" inquired the *Duc de Noailles*, as the Regent paused for a moment.

"No," replied his highness. "The *Compagnie d'Occident* shall not only have sovereign authority,

but the insignia of royalty, and shall bear for its proud blazon an old river—the Mississippi—leaning on a horn of abundance, with golden fleurs-de-lis in chief, and a crown tréflée.”

“I have listened to all that your highness has advanced,” said D’Aguesseau, gravely, “and I must now offer a respectful remonstrance. The sovereign privileges you propose to confer upon the Compagnie d’Occident will place too much power in the hands of its governor.”

“I also must oppose the grant,” said Noailles. “Unless the privileges to be accorded to the Sieur Law are limited to the extent of those heretofore conferred upon M. Crozat, I cannot sanction the edict proposed by your highness.”

“But it is only by the enjoyment of such privileges that I can hope for success, M. le Duc,” remarked Law.

“Perhaps not, sir,” rejoined Noailles; “but better you should fail than France suffer injury. It is my duty to warn his highness against placing

unlimited power in the hands of a stranger—and it may be a secret enemy of France.”

“An enemy of France!” exclaimed Law, indignantly. “My conduct is open to no such suspicion, M. le Duc, and I must require you to retract the unwarrantable accusation.”

“Retraction is needless, M. Law,” said the Regent. “The charge is absurd, and the duke’s motive in making it too apparent to allow it to weigh with me for a moment.”

“Without going so far as the Duc de Noailles, and having no apprehension of any secret designs against this country on the part of the Sieur Law,” observed D’Aguesseau, “I hold it to be extremely unwise, if not absolutely dangerous, to place such power as would be conferred by the proposed edict in the hands of any individual.”

“What means this sudden change, messieurs?” said Dubois, looking at them curiously. “You came here anxious to get rid of a bad bargain, and having found a purchaser, would tie his

hands. A short time ago the Sieur Law was the only person who could conduct the trade of Louisiana. Now you denounce him as an enemy of France."

"I would not trust him too far," said Noailles, bluntly.

"Nor I," added the chancellor.

"In other words, you will only allow him to ruin himself," rejoined Dubois. "Your offer of the Louisiana trade was a trap, in which you have been caught yourselves. M. Law *will* succeed with the Compagnie d'Occident."

"At all events, I shall try to ensure his success," said the Regent. "I cannot listen to these remonstrances. The letters patent conferring sovereign powers on the Compagnie d'Occident will forthwith be issued. M. Law will be uncontrolled director."

"Apparently I have forfeited your highness's favour, since my advice is unheeded," murmured Noailles.

“If my counsel is of such little weight, it is clear I must be unfit for the office I hold, monseigneur,” said D’Aguesseau. “I must beg, therefore, to resign the seals.”

“I accept your resignation, sir,” rejoined the Regent, coldly.

“Under these circumstances, monseigneur, and as I have acted in this matter with the chancellor,” said Noailles, “I have no alternative but to retire from the Council of Finance.”

“Pray do so, M. le Duc,” said the Regent.

“If the Sieur Law, as a stranger, were not disqualified from being minister of finance, I might think your highness designed my post for him,” observed Noailles, sarcastically.

“I have other views, sir,” said the Regent, haughtily.

“If his highness cannot make M. Law minister of finance, M. le Duc,” remarked Dubois, “there is nothing to prevent him from being guided by the advice of so able a counsellor.”

“I cannot congratulate his highness upon his secret counsellors,” retorted Noailles. “But though you, M. l’Abbé, do not labour under the same disability as M. Law, I would recommend you to keep in the background. Your entrance into the Council will be marked by the desertion of all the important persons in the kingdom.”

No reply to this keen sarcasm was made by Du-bois, except a look, which the Duc de Noailles ever afterwards remembered, and with reason.

“I do not think you will complain of my choice of your successor, duke,” said the Regent.

“I am curious to know whom your highness will honour with the appointment,” said Noailles.

“The first to enter the cabinet shall have it,” said the Regent, hearing a slight noise outside.

As the words were uttered, the folding-doors were thrown wide open by the usher, who announced, in a loud voice, M. d’Argenson.

“D’Argenson!” whispered Noailles to D’Agues-

seau. "I see it all now. Our dismissal was planned."

"I guessed what was coming, and therefore tendered my resignation," said the other, in the same tone.

The lieutenant-general of police looked dark and stern, as usual, and nothing could be read in his inflexible features.

"I want a chief of the Council of Finances," said the Regent to him.

"I am ready to take the office, monseigneur," replied D'Argenson.

"There is your commission, sir," said the duke, signing the warrant, and delivering it to D'Argenson, who received it with a stiff inclination of his person. "Your place is soon filled, you perceive, M. le Duc," the Regent added to Noailles.

"There could not be much difficulty in filling it, monseigneur, since the matter was pre-arranged," replied the duke.

“There is yet another vacancy,” said the Regent. “I want a keeper of the seals.”

“The office will exactly suit me,” replied D’Argenson.

“Of course it will,” said D’Aguesseau. “He will take all the offices of State, if they are offered him.”

Meantime, the Regent signed another commission, and handed it to D’Argenson, who received it with a stiff bow, like the first.

“Your highness will have a very able minister of finance, as well as a very efficient keeper of the seals,” said Noailles. “He will receive inspiration on the one hand from M. Law, and on the other from the Abbé Dubois.” And with a profound salutation he retired with D’Aguesseau, observing to the latter, as they quitted the cabinet, “We have been out-manœuvred, but we will have our revenge.”

At the same time, M. Crozat made a profound reverence to the Regent, and withdrew.

“Our next conflict will be with the parlia-

ment," observed Dubois. "There M. Law's enemies will carry on the war against him."

"I laugh at their malice," said Law. "No personal apprehensions shall deter me from putting my grand project into execution. I have already explained to his highness," he added to D'Argenson, "that I design gradually to extinguish the discredited State paper, and shall absorb two-fifths of the notes by employing them in the Compagnie d'Occident."

"I will extinguish the whole debt by a master-stroke," said D'Argenson. "Let an edict be issued raising the value of the silver marc from forty to sixty livres. I will procure ingots, which can be coined at the rate of sixty livres to the marc. Let the edict further enjoin that forty-eight livres in specie, weighing nine ounces and a half, with twelve livres in State notes, shall be brought to obtain the new money. By this means we shall gain the sixth part of the specie, and the whole of the notes."

“I dislike the plan,” said Law. “If put into execution, it will cause general and just indignation. It is unworthy in a State so to pay its debts.”

“I cannot oppose the first scheme proposed by my new minister of finance,” said the Regent. “The measure certainly does not meet with my entire approval, but let it be tried.”

“I think it right to state to your highness that it will be seriously detrimental to my system,” remonstrated Law. “The public will imagine that I have instigated the measure, whereas I am strenuously opposed to it.”

“I have not accepted the important offices to which it has pleased his highness to appoint me, with the intention of [being the mere automaton described by the Duc de Noailles,” said D’Argenson. “The plan is mine, and I will take its entire responsibility.”

“It will inevitably bring us into collision with

the parliament," said Law. "They will refuse to register the edict."

"Let them do so, and set their authority at defiance," said D'Argenson. "The power of the parliament must be controlled."

"On that point I am clearly of your opinion," rejoined the Regent. "At all hazards the edict shall be issued. And at the same time you shall have the letters patent for the Compagnie d'Occident," he added to Law.

With this the conference came to an end.

II.

HOW LAW WAS SAVED BY A COUP D'ÉTAT.

As Law had foreseen, the promulgation of the edict recommended by D'Argenson, enjoining a new coinage of specie in the proportion of sixty livres to the silver marc, thus occasioning a diminution of nearly fifty per cent. on the money already reduced in value by a previous recoinage, roused popular irritation to such a point as almost to threaten a revolution. The parliament of Paris, which for some time had set itself in opposition to the Regent, now declared open war, by issuing a decree prohibiting all persons from receiving the

new money. This decree was instantly annulled by the Regent, as derogatory to the royal authority, and all printers were interdicted, on pain of death, from reproducing it; but the parliament was not to be daunted, and placarded written copies on the walls. The capitalists quickly took the alarm, and all monetary transactions sustained a severe check. A deputation from the parliament, headed by the president, De Mesmes, waited upon the Regent at the Palais Royal, but were coldly received, and dismissed without any concession made to them. The populace now began to murmur, and fresh fears of an outbreak were entertained.

Determined to crush the revolt in the bud, the Regent caused the Mint and Mr. Law's Bank, both of which had been threatened with pillage, to be occupied by troops, and then publicly proclaimed that the obnoxious law would be enforced. At the same time, a detachment of musqueteers was sent to the Palais de Justice to seize the par-

liamentary presses, while other officers were despatched to the markets to compel all reluctant persons to take the new money. After a long struggle, during which the Regent, acting throughout by the advice of D'Argenson, continued inflexible, the parliament brought the matter to an issue by an ordinance launched against Law, prohibiting all persons employed in the Bank from receiving or holding any of the royal funds, and reviving an obsolete statute, by which any stranger was prohibited, under severe penalties, from interfering, directly or indirectly, with the management and administration of the royal funds. This offensive ordinance was instantly annulled, and the Regent turned his back upon the president, De Mesmes, who waited upon him. Efforts were then made to excite a popular tumult, and, but for the firmness displayed by D'Argenson, might have been successful. A report was industriously circulated that Law had been arrested by the officers of parliament, and was about to be hanged pri-

vately in the court of the Palais de Justice. Happily, the report was destitute of foundation, but as in the present temper of the populace apprehensions might reasonably be entertained for the great financier's safety, he was advised by D'Argenson to seek an asylum in the Palais Royal. Things had now come to such a pass, that nothing was left to save Law and his Bank except a coup d'état, and this ultimatum was decided upon by the Regent.

Next morning, at the early hour of six, the members of the Chambers were summoned in the king's name to attend a lit de justice at the Tuileries at ten o'clock, and after some hesitation complied, repairing thither on foot in their scarlet robes. Effectual steps had been taken by D'Argenson to prevent resistance. Troops were in readiness everywhere. Before daybreak the regiment of Guards had been marched out. The Carrousel and the Hôtel de Soubise were occupied by the military. Probably, owing to these preparations,

and the dread inspired by D'Argenson's determined character, tranquillity continued undisturbed.

Though completely in ignorance of the Regent's designs, the parliament could not fail to discern in the downcast looks of its partisans the Duc de Noailles and D'Aguesseau, in the absence of the Duc de Maine and the Comte de Toulouse, in the raised seats assigned to the peers, and, above all, in the sternly triumphant looks of D'Argenson, that a heavy blow was intended against them. It soon came. After a discourse full of bitter invective, pronounced by D'Argenson, the young king, then eight years of age, speaking from the throne, told the parliament it was his sovereign pleasure that the edict, to which they had hitherto refused assent, should be forthwith registered.

Upon this, the president, M. de Mesmes, with the whole of the Chambers, prostrated themselves humbly before the youthful monarch, and besought him to give them time for consideration. But he had been too well schooled by his uncle to

yield to their supplications, and peremptorily refused. An end was put to the scene by D'Argenson, who exclaimed, in a loud, authoritative voice, "Le Roi veut être obéi, et obéi sur-le-champ." Whereupon, without more ado, the edict was registered. A complete victory over the parliament was thus gained by the Council of Regency. The peers and dukes recovered their right to assist at a *lit de justice*, seated and covered; the princes legitimatised by Louis XIV. were deprived of the high privileges conferred upon them, and reduced to the rank of peers; while the superintendence of the education of the youthful king was transferred from the Duc de Maine to the Duc de Bourbon. But the Regent, not content with mere victory, punished three of the most obstinate of the offenders by sending them as prisoners to the isles of Sainte-Marguerite.

After this defeat of the parliament, combined with the discomfiture of his enemies, the Duc de Noailles and D'Aguesseau, both of whom were

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exiled from court, Law was enabled to pursue his System unmolested, and he addressed himself vigorously to the establishment of the Compagnie d'Occident, which had been necessarily suspended during the protracted conflict. The company was quickly formed, and as quickly commenced operations; but before particularising them, we must advert to another highly important step taken by the Regent and his counsellor. This was the conversion of the General Bank into a Royal Bank—the change being effected in a rather irregular and underhand manner.

A secret council was held by the Regent at the Palais Royal, consisting of the Duc de Bourbon, chief of the Council of Regency, the Duc d'Antin, minister for the Home Department, and D'Argenson. Of late the chancellor had conceived a secret jealousy of Law, as he discovered that the Scottish financier possessed a much larger share of the Regent's confidence than he himself did, and it was highly mortifying to him to find that he had

been summoned to approve a new scheme destined still further to aggrandise his rival. He listened, therefore, with secret displeasure to the perusal of an edict prepared by Law, by which it was ordained that the king should take the General Bank into his own hands, under the denomination of the Royal Bank, should reimburse the shareholders, and become answerable for the outstanding notes, amounting to fifty-nine millions of livres. It was furthermore declared by the edict that it was his Majesty's sovereign will and pleasure that the Sieur John Law should be director-general of the Royal Bank, and that branches should be fixed at Lyons, Rochelle, Tours, Orléans, and Amiens.

The Duc de Bourbon, who had already benefited largely by Law's projects, and who looked for still greater gains as the System proceeded, at once sanctioned the edict. So did the Duc d'Antin, who was an obsequious courtier, and, moreover, entertained a high opinion of Law's ca-

pacities. But D'Argenson hesitated, and even uttered a remonstrance. A half menace, however, from the Regent, who would now brook no opposition, decided him, and he reluctantly yielded assent.

Thus irregularly passed, the edict became a State-law, and the Royal Bank was established.

But though D'Argenson succumbed, he was deeply offended, and from that moment Law had to encounter his secret but determined opposition.

III.

THE ANTI-SYSTEM.

THE Royal Bank, of which Law had been appointed director-general, was opened in the ancient Hôtel Mazarin, a vast palace, formerly belonging to the celebrated cardinal of that name, now appropriated to the Bibliothèque Impériale, standing between the Rue de Richelieu and the Rue Vivienne, and running in a lateral direction towards the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs.

Behind this magnificent palace, on the side of the Rue Vivienne, was an extensive garden, protected from the street by a high wall, in the centre

of which were large iron gates. Within the palace, besides many noble apartments, was a grand gallery, built by Cardinal Mazarin, skirting the Rue de Richelieu as far as the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, and at present devoted to the superb collection of prints and manuscripts belonging to the Bibliothèque Impériale. Here were placed the bureaux and counters of the Royal Bank, access to them being from the Rue Vivienne, through the gate before mentioned.

In this spacious edifice, which cost Law upwards of a million livres, ample room was afforded, not only for the Royal Bank, but for the Compagnie d'Occident, the approach to the bureaux and cabinets of the latter establishment being through a grand portal in the Rue Richelieu, above which were emblazoned the arms of the company—namely, the Mississippi leaning on a horn of abundance. On the death of Cardinal Mazarin, his splendid palace had been divided, and the

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portion allotted to the Compagnie d'Occident, was known as the Hôtel de Nevers.

Everything connected with both branches of the System was conducted upon a princely scale, an immense number of officials being employed by the director-general. Uncontrolled power was exercised by him over both departments, and the order and regularity marking all their proceedings attested the excellence of his management. The gigantic and complicated machinery of both Bank and Company moved with the ease and exactitude of clockwork.

The administrative council of the Compagnie d'Occident comprehended thirty directors, presided over by Law. With him every plan originated, or received his sanction prior to adoption. Mere puppets in his hands, the directors, like the employés, were ever ready to do his bidding.

The reimbursement of the shareholders of the

general Bank was effected through Law's instrumentality, in a manner wonderfully advantageous to that body, and instead of being aggrieved by the arrangement, they had abundant reason to be satisfied. The 1200 shares of 5000 livres each, which formed its original capital, were purchased by the government at par, but as the shareholders had not actually paid more than 800 livres on each share, their gains were prodigious—not less, indeed, than 4200 livres on each share! Never before had such enormous profit been realised—enough to turn the heads of all who heard of it!

In introducing M. Nicomède Cossard, we had occasion to mention that he was one of the largest shareholders in the Bank. Consequently, the arrangement just described was extraordinarily beneficial to him. All his gains, and a good deal more, were now invested in actions of the Compagnie d'Occident, of which, by favour of Law, he had been appointed a director. Laborde, also, was a

considerable shareholder in the company, and a director, and both he and his intended son-in-law had entire faith in its success. This confidence did credit to their discrimination, since for a time the company languished, owing to the prejudices existing against the colony; prejudices, which could not be overcome, even by the most brilliant representations of its natural wealth and commercial capabilities.

To stimulate the public, and add to the resources of the company, Law purchased the monopoly of the fabrication and sale of tobacco, one of the royal farms, for a term of nine years, at an annual rent of two millions; and the arrangement eventually proved highly advantageous, since extensive plantations had already been commenced in Louisiana, and its tobacco was considered superior to that of Virginia. He next bought for 1,600,000 livres the charter and effects of the Senegal Company, by which means he obtained the exclusive

privilege of the Guinea trade, together with an immense store of merchandise, and eleven vessels fully equipped.

But while the director-general was strengthening the company by these important acquisitions, a serious opposition had arisen. A scheme known as the Anti-System, was secretly concocted between the Chancellor D'Argenson and the Messieurs Paris—four brothers, sprung from a very humble stock in Dauphiny, who, by their remarkable enterprise and ability, employed in the service of the state during the late reign, had become large capitalists. This scheme, it was confidently anticipated, would paralyse if not destroy Law's company.

At the time of which we write, the right of recovering the revenues arising from the state-imposts was invariably let to associations of financiers, under the designation of "fermes générales;" and as the power of renewing the leases rested with D'Argenson, in his capacity of chief

minister of finance, he exercised it in favour of his coadjutors, assigning the taxes upon salt, the import and export duties (*aides, traites et gabelles*), with other imposts comprised in the state-farms to the frères Paris, for a term of six years, at an annual rental of forty-eight millions.

An admirable basis being thus obtained for the operation, a company was immediately formed by the frères Paris upon the precise plan of the Compagnie d'Occident, with a capital of the same amount as that company, divided into 100,000 shares of 1000 livres each, and offering the revenues of the state-farms as a guarantee for the regular payment of its dividends. The latter recommendation gave the Fermes Générales a decided advantage over the Occident, the chief security of which was a distant and almost unproductive colony, and the effect became speedily manifest in the decline of Law's shares, and the rise of those of his opponents. Moreover, while Law only paid four per cent., his rivals promised

twelve or fifteen. With such advantages, the Anti-System could not but prove a formidable antagonist to the System.

The tide of prosperity which had hitherto borne Law on, appeared now to have turned, and his credit began slightly to wane. Some even of the directors of the *Compagnie d'Occident* felt uneasy, but their misgivings were not shared by Laborde and Cossard, both of whom, as we have said, felt certain that their leader would weather the storm, and safely reach the haven for which he was bound.

They were right. While the promoters of the Anti-System were congratulating themselves upon a speedy and complete victory, Law was meditating fresh projects for the aggrandisement of his company, and the extinction of all rivalry against it.

One day, when he was at the *Palais Royal*, closeted with the Regent, D'Argenson entered the cabinet, and could not refrain from taunting him

with his inability to make good his promise to raise the shares of his company to par.

“That tour de force was to have been performed months ago,” remarked the minister of finance, with a sneer; “but it seems less likely of accomplishment than ever, now that you have got a formidable opposition in the Anti-System.”

“The Anti-System does not give me the slightest uneasiness,” rejoined Law. “If I had thought fit, I could have easily crushed it at the commencement. But I was willing to let the frères Paris try their hand—and they have really done exceedingly well—with *your* assistance—always with *your* assistance, M. le Ministre.”

“You give me more credit than I deserve, M. Law,” said the other. “I have lent no aid to the frères Paris, beyond accepting their very advantageous tender for the state-farms, thereby providing their company with a guarantee, which, to judge from results, the public seem greatly to prefer to

the unprofitable colony of the Mississippi. Captain Lamothe Cadillac, who has just returned from Louisiana, gives deplorable accounts of the country."

"Captain Lamothe Cadillac is a hireling of the frères Paris," said Law.

"You say so because his statements are not agreeable to you, but I believe them to be correct," rejoined D'Argenson. "It is to be hoped you may be able to maintain your ground, M. Law. That your rivals will do so, there can be little doubt."

"You will change your opinion before long, sir," remarked Law. "The promoters of the Anti-System have played their best cards, so the game is mine. I am really obliged to you for reminding me of the pledge I gave the Duc de Noailles to raise the shares to par."

"I ought to apologise for the liberty," said D'Argenson. "But no one expects you to make

good an idle boast. We all know you *would* raise the shares—if you *could*.”

“To show how erroneous your notions are, sir,” returned Law, “I undertake before his highness to buy all those shares at par, at six months date, with a premium of forty per cent., which I shall be content to lose, if I do not fulfil my engagement at the period fixed.”

“Eh! what?—do I hear aright?” cried D’Argenson. “You engage to pay a hundred livres in six months, for a share now worth only sixty, and to give forty livres premium? Is it so?”

“Precisely,” replied Law. “And when my offer is publicly announced, you will see the effect it will have upon the shares. I recommend you to buy as many as you can—and quickly. Two hundred at the present price will realise fifty thousand livres in six months. Think of that, M. le Chancelier.”

“I am lost in amazement,” exclaimed D’Argen-

son, stupefied. "I never heard of such a *marché à prime*. It appears to me like a gamester's last stake."

"Ask your friends, the frères Paris, what they think of my offer, M. le Ministre," said Law. "They will guess its meaning. To do them justice, they are shrewd, far-sighted men."

"A propos of the frères Paris!" remarked the Regent. "Is it true, M. le Chancelier, that you received from them a bonus of three hundred thousand livres, on renewing the lease of the *fermes générales*?"

"I received the customary bonus, monseigneur, —nothing more," replied D'Argenson.

The Regent and Law exchanged a glance, which did not escape the chancellor.

"Had you tenders from any other capitalists, besides the frères Paris?" pursued the Regent.

"None so advantageous as theirs, monseigneur," was the reluctant reply.

“Not so advantageous, perhaps, to *yourself*, sir,” remarked the Regent, sharply.

“Theirs was the highest tender I had, monseigneur,” rejoined D’Argenson.

“Hum!” ejaculated the Regent, incredulously.

“Your highness seems to doubt my assertion,” cried the chancellor.

“Competition was not permitted,” said Law. “Had intimation been vouchsafed me that the leases of the farms would be renewed, I would have given a far higher rental for them than that obtained.”

“But not a larger bonus to the minister,” said the Regent, pointedly.

“The farms are safely let, and at their full value,” rejoined D’Argenson.

“But more, it seems, might have been got for them,” said the Regent. “M. Law, I think, has a right to complain that notice of the intended renewal was not given him. It would serve you

right were I to compel you to annul the contract you have made. What term have you granted?"

"Six years, monseigneur," replied D'Argenson. "And I repeat, the farms are extremely well let. The success of the frères Paris justifies the opinion I formed of them. Your highness, I trust, will not interfere with the arrangement?"

"I make no promise," replied the Regent, coldly. "It is perfectly clear that the scheme has been got up with the design of injuring M. Law, and you cannot wonder if reprisals are made. The frères Paris need expect no consideration from me."

"But they may expect justice, monseigneur."

"Justice they shall have—strict justice," said the Regent.

And signifying to D'Argenson that his audience was at an end, the chancellor bowed, and left the cabinet.

"I think I have frightened him," said the Regent, with a laugh, as soon as the chancellor was

gone. "He will carry consternation into the enemies camp. An end must be put to these intrigues and cabals. Who is the Captain Lamothe Cadillac he spoke of?"

"An old officer, who has been for many years in the Mississippi, monseigneur. The frères Paris have hired him to run down the colony, and he goes about to all the cafés, and does considerable mischief by his talk. We have tried to silence him, but he is stupid and impracticable, and cannot be induced to hold his tongue."

"Shut him up in the Bastille," said the Regent. "Take this lettre de cachet," he added, filling up a warrant and handing it to him.

Ere Law could depart on his errand, he was stopped by the Duc de Bourbon, who at this moment entered the cabinet with the Duc d'Antin and the Duc de la Force.

"Ah! M. Law," cried M. le Duc, after making a reverence to the Regent, "we have just heard a most extraordinary piece of intelligence from

D'Argenson, and are come to ascertain if it is true."

"If he has told you, M. le Duc," said Law, "that I have engaged to buy the shares of the Compagnie d'Occident at par, at six months' date, with forty livres premium on each share, he has stated the truth. I dare say he added that I must be mad to make the offer; and very likely you concur with him in opinion."

"I own I scarcely supposed the offer could be serious," replied the Duc de Bourbon.

"It is perfectly serious," said Law. "I shall be ready to fulfil my *marché à prime*. How many shares have you, M. le Duc?"

"Let me see," replied the other, consulting his tablets. "Eight hundred, for which I have paid 240,000 livres."

"And for which you will receive 400,000 livres in six months, being a profit of 160,000 livres. The latter sum shall be paid down as a premium."

“Whatever happens you will be on the right side, M. le Duc,” observed the Regent, laughing.

“I have two hundred shares, M. Law,” said the Duc de la Force.

“And I a hundred,” added D’Antin.

“I will purchase them on the same terms I have offered M. le Duc,” observed Law. “But if his grace and you will permit me to advise you, you will keep them, and buy more. It is against my own interest to give you this counsel, but I feel bound to tell you that if you sell now, you will assuredly regret the step.”

“Then I will keep my shares,” said the Duc de la Force.

“And so will I,” added D’Antin.

“You are wise,” observed Law. “What is your determination, M. le Duc?”

“To sell,” replied the Duc de Bourbon. “The premium is an irresistible temptation.”

“As you please,” said Law. “But what will you say if those shares should make two hundred per cent.?” he added, in a whisper. “You will then regret having parted with them.”

“Two hundred per cent! Is there any chance of it?” inquired the duke.

“The thing is certain,” replied Law.

“Then I hold. I won’t sell,” cried the duke. “We live in an age of wonders. I owe twenty millions, but I begin to think that with your assistance, M. Law, I shall be able to pay my creditors.”

“We are all in debt. We all want money. I am ashamed to confess how much I owe,” said the Duc de la Force. “But my hope is in M. Law. Therefore I support his System.”

“Yes, yes, we all support the System,” rejoined D’Antin. “I believe in it as faithfully as a devout Mussulman does in the Koran.”

“And you are right,” observed the Regent.

“I am in M. Law’s secret, and know the marvels he is certain to perform. I believe he can help you to pay your debts, M. le Duc, prodigious as you tell us they are, and enable you to rebuild Chantilly.”

“If M. le Duc will do me the honour to consult me, I will endeavour to direct his speculations towards the desired end,” said Law.

“Be certain I will,” cried the duke, eagerly. “Whatever you advise I will do. Then you think there is a chance of my being able to pay off——”

“A very good chance, M. le Duc,” replied Law. “But you must be content to wait for a few months. When the opportunity offers I will not neglect it. Meantime, I trust I may venture to count on your grace’s support?”

“On my entire support, M. Law—in *all* your projects,” replied the duke, emphatically.

“I need not assure you that you may count

on mine, M. Law," said the Duc de la Force. "You have had it on all occasions."

"I make no professions, but M. Law knows he can calculate on me," said D'Antin.

Estimating these assurances at their true worth, Law made a profound reverence to the Regent and quitted the cabinet.

But he was detained in the ante-chamber. The few words as to the *marché à prime*, let fall by D'Argenson to the Duc de Bourbon, had been overheard, and caused an extraordinary sensation among the courtiers, and no sooner was Law perceived than a dense mass of titled personages pressed upon him, offering to sell their shares, and stunning him by their vociferations. He could neither extricate himself nor obtain a hearing. If he addressed the marquis who had caught hold of his arm, he was compelled to turn to the prince who had possession of his shoulder. Those behind were just as eager and impatient as those in front, and he seemed in danger of suffocation. At last

he was liberated by the intervention of the ushers, who called out that the doors of the Regent's cabinet were thrown open, whereupon his tormentors left him.

IV.

COMTE DE HORN AND CAPTAIN DE MILLE.

WHILE the Regent was taking his chocolate, and chatting with De Broglie, Nocé, Canillac, and others of his favourites, two important personages, namely, the Prince de Robecque-Montmorency and the Maréchal d'Isinghien approached him, and begged permission to present their young relative, the Comte Antoine-Joseph de Horn.

“My young kinsman,” said Montmorency, “is a direct descendant of the famous Comte de Horn, who, I need scarcely remind your highness,

mounted the scaffold prepared for him and his bosom friend, the illustrious Comte D'Egmont, by the sanguinary Duke of Alva, in the days of Philip the Second of Spain. Antoine de Horn is the second son of Emmanuel Philippe, Prince de Horn, and Antoinette Princesse de Ligne, and is allied to the Emperor of Germany and other sovereign families. There is not a nobler house in Europe than that of Horn. The late prince, Philippe-Emmanuel, as your highness must be aware, served in France, with the rank of lieutenant-general, at the battles of Spire and Ramillies, and was severely wounded and made prisoner at the latter conflict. On the peace of Utrecht, when the Low Countries passed over to Austria, the house of Horn of course came under the domination of the Emperor, and Antoine is an officer of cavalry in his Imperial Majesty's service."

"You have omitted to mention that the Comte de Horn is a relative of my own, through my mother, Madame la Douairière," said the Regent.

“Does he bring letters to me from his brother, Prince Maximilian?”

“I believe not, monseigneur,” replied Montmorency.

“That is strange,” remarked the Regent.

“It is easily explained, monseigneur,” said the Maréchal D’Isinghien. “The brothers have quarrelled, as unfortunately brothers will sometimes quarrel, and the count, who is proud and high-spirited, will neither ask, nor accept, a favour from the prince. To speak truth, for I need have no disguise with your highness, who is very lenient in such matters, the Comte de Horn is excessively fond of play, and has lost a good deal of money. Besides this, he has been engaged in some affairs of gallantry at Brussels, and these have given Prince Maximilian displeasure.”

“From what you say, maréchal,” observed the Regent, laughing, “the Comte de Horn is well qualified to be enrolled among my Roués. Where is he? Point him out to me.”

“He is yonder, monseigneur—near the door, talking to the Duc d’Aremberg,” replied D’Isinghien.

“I can’t distinguish his features very clearly, said the Regent, who, we have already remarked, was almost purblind, “but he seems to have a handsome person and a good mien.”

“The belles Bruxellaises deem him very handsome, monseigneur,” replied D’Isinghien.

“And no doubt they are good judges. Well, present him.”

The Comte de Horn, who shortly afterwards made his obeisance to the Regent, and was very graciously received, was tall and extremely well proportioned, but had more the look of a Spaniard, than of a Fleming. In age he was about two-and-twenty. His physiognomy was remarkable, and fixed the attention so strongly that it could not be easily forgotten. Perfectly oval in form, with regular features, large dark eyes, a firm mouth and white teeth, his countenance, though unques-

tionably handsome, had a sinister expression, which destroyed its beauty. His complexion was sallow, and by contrast added to the effect of his dark eyes and beetling brows. He wore a beard and moustaches, à la Richelieu. His attire was of sky-blue silk, richly embroidered with silver. The finest Mechlin lace adorned his wrists and cravat, and a well-powdered and very becoming peruke, with a diamond-hilted sword, and shoes with diamond buckles and red heels, completed his costume. His manners were easy and graceful, and perfectly consistent with his high birth.

“You are welcome to Paris, M. le Comte,” observed the Regent. “I suppose you have come hither merely in quest of amusement?”

“Not entirely, monseigneur,” replied De Horn. “It is impossible, I conceive, to be in the gayest and pleasantest city in the world without being perfectly amused, whatever one’s tastes may be, but I will frankly own that my chief object in visiting your capital is to make money. I have

a modest pension—a very modest pension—of twelve thousand livres from my brother, Prince Maximilian, and I don't find it quite enough."

"You have come to the wrong place, M. le Comte," remarked the Regent. "You should go to London. You will find it easier to spend money than to make it in Paris."

"Unless I am misinformed, monseigneur, immense sums are just now made in the Rue Quincampoix."

"So they say," rejoined the Regent. "Are you usually lucky at play, count?"

"By no means, monseigneur. As a rule, fortune does not favour me. But I am not discouraged. I play on."

"Do you ever win?" asked the Regent.

"Rarely, I must own—very rarely."

"I thought so," remarked the Regent. "Such being the case, if you mean to speculate, I advise you to abstain altogether from the gaming-table."

"As well might I try to resist the allurements

of beauty, or pass the brimming goblet untasted, as forswear cards and dice, monseigneur. I cannot do it. I hope M. Law, the financial conjuror, will provide me with funds, but play I must. Play is my master-passion, against which I feel it would be idle to contend, so I never make the attempt. Had it been possible to reclaim me from the evil habit, as he calls it, the prince my brother would have done so long ago. But lectures are of no avail with me."

"Hypocrisy, at all events, is not among your failings, M. le Comte," observed the Regent. "You must sup with me to-night, though I cannot promise you either biribi or lansquenet."

"Neither are needed, monseigneur. It is a privilege, indeed, to be your guest, of which I shall ever feel proud. I have heard the most wonderful accounts of your highness's suppers from my brother-officer, Captain de Mille."

"I do not remember that Captain de Mille

ever supped with me," remarked the Regent.

"Indeed, I never heard of him before."

"That is singular," said the count. "I understood him to say he has frequently been your highness's guest, and the details he gave of your inimitable entertainments seemed so accurate, that I felt convinced he must have been present on the occasions he referred to."

"Your friend was mystifying you, count."

"Perhaps your highness may have forgotten him?"

"Impossible! I never forget any one."

"Then I am really puzzled. If De Mille has boasted unwarrantably, as would appear, he deserves to be exposed. But the matter may be cleared up at once, with your highness's permission. Captain de Mille is without—in the ante-chamber."

"Let him come in, by all means," said the Regent. "I should like to see my unknown guest."

The Comte de Horn bowed, quitted the Regent's presence, and returned, in a few moments, with a tall, handsome young man, dressed with extreme richness and elegance.

Without manifesting the slightest embarrassment, this personage stepped forward, and made a profound obeisance to the Regent, who, recognising him at once, and astonished at his effrontery, did not deign to acknowledge the salutation.

"I acquit you of all blame in this improper proceeding, M.le Comte," said the Regent, sternly, to De Horn. "You must be unaware who you have brought before me."

"Monseigneur, this is Captain de Mille, of whom I spoke."

"He may think fit to style himself so, but his rightful name is Raoul Laborde. He has not deceived you in asserting that he has supped with me, but he ought to have explained that he has been banished for his misdoings from the Palais Royal. I have yet to consider in what manner

I shall punish his present unauthorised intrusion."

"Before I am dismissed, I beseech your highness to hear my explanation," said De Mille. "On leaving Paris, after I had the misfortune to incur your highness's displeasure, I proceeded to Bruges, where I had an uncle on my mother's side, M. Laurent de Mille, and with him I at once found a home. He was unmarried, and in an infirm state of health at the time of my arrival, and died within two months, leaving me his heir, on condition that I should assume his name. This I now bear, and I have honourably distinguished it, as my papers will demonstrate to your highness. I am now a captain of cavalry in the Austrian service."

"I can corroborate this statement, monseigneur," said the Comte de Horn. "De Mille is a captain in the same regiment of cavalry as myself, but I was not aware of the previous part of his history. Till this moment I supposed he was a son of

old Laurent de Mille, whose property he inherited."

It was easy to perceive that this statement had produced the intended effect upon the Regent, and that the offender's pardon was secured.

"I did wrong in venturing to approach your highness without permission," said Captain de Mille. "But I relied upon your good nature, of which I have known so many proofs, to excuse me."

"The explanation you have given me is far more satisfactory than I anticipated," said the Regent. "I am glad to hear you have distinguished yourself, Captain de Mille, as I presume I must now call you. I am willing to overlook the irregularity of your present proceeding, and to attribute it to creditable motives. The prohibition against your entrance into the Palais Royal shall be removed, and henceforth you are at liberty to present yourself at my levees."

De Mille bowed profoundly, and retired with the Comte de Horn.

When they were gone, the Comte de Nocé approached the Regent, and said to him in a low tone, "Monseigneur, you are aware that I am a physiognomist. Eh bien! I have attentively studied the Comte de Horn's countenance during his interview with your highness. It is a bad face—a very bad face. I am convinced he is capable of any crime. Nay, more, I believe he will come to a violent end."

"Bah!" exclaimed the Regent, incredulously. "If you had said this of Captain de Mille, I might believe it—but De Horn!—no!"

"It is so written in his face, monseigneur," rejoined Nocé. "And unless I am greatly mistaken, De Mille will share his fate."

V.

THE CAFÉ PROCOPE.

THE first café was opened in Paris by an Armenian named Pascal, about forty years before the date of our story, and so quickly did these establishments increase, being greatly to the taste of the Parisians, that at the time of which we write there were more than three hundred in existence, one of the best being the Café Procope, now known as the Café Zoppi, situated in the Rue Saint-Germain-des-Prés, exactly opposite the old Comédie.

Besides the best coffee in Paris, a great deal of

amusement could be had at the *Café Procope*, play being permitted in a back salon; while in the private cabinets delicious suppers were served, and partaken of by charming actresses from the *Comédie*, and fascinating *filles de l'Opéra*. Thus, for various reasons, the *Café Procope* ranked high amongst pleasant places of resort, and was much frequented by poets, actors, painters, men of business, men of learning, men of science, and men of pleasure.

On quitting the *Palais Royal*, the *Comte de Horn* and *Captain de Mille* drove to the café in question, where they expected to meet a friend, the *Chevalier d'Etampes*, and on entering the principal salon, a spacious apartment, richly gilded, and embellished with mirrors, they discovered the object of their search seated at a table, taking coffee with another personage, with whom they were unacquainted, but whose appearance and manner did not prepossess them in his favour.

The *Chevalier d'Etampes* was a young man of

some two or three-and-twenty, tolerably good-looking, and well-dressed, but the individual with him was middle-aged, short and stout, the most noticeable part of his coarse physiognomy being an excessively flat nose; and though his habiliments were rich, he had a decidedly bourgeois look and manner. De Horn and De Mille wondered at their friend's familiarity with a person of this description, but their surprise ceased when he was introduced to them by D'Etampes as M. Nicomède Cossard, director of the Compagnie d'Occident. Then they understood why so much attention was paid him, and became, in their turn, anxious to secure his good graces.

Ever since Cossard had become a director of the great company, he had risen immensely in his own opinion, and gave himself an air of great importance. To judge by his talk, he was Law's right hand. Nothing was done by the director-general without consulting him. Thus, when the Comte de Horn spoke of Law's intention of buying up

the shares of the *Compagnie*, with forty per cent. premium, he at once exclaimed,

“That was my idea. I suggested it to the director-general, who at once, perceiving it to be a masterstroke of policy, adopted it. We shall crush the *Frères Paris*. But this is only the commencement of the System. I have other plans here,” he added, tapping his forehead, “which, when developed and brought into operation, will astonish you.”

“Perhaps you will be so obliging as to give me a hint now and then, *M. le Directeur*,” said the *Comte de Horn*. “I have come to Paris in the hope of making a little money.”

“*M. Cossard* has already given me some valuable advice by which I hope to profit,” observed the *Chevalier d’Etampes*.”

“I trust *M. Cossard* will be equally complaisant to me,” remarked *De Mille*. “A few words from him may enable me to make a fortune.”

“It will afford me great pleasure to serve you,

messieurs," replied Cossard. "But if I do give you a hint, you must act upon it without asking for an explanation. Permit me to inquire if you have any shares in the Occident?"

"I have twenty, which I mean to sell to-morrow, and secure the premium promised by M. Law," replied the Comte de Horn.

"You will do wrong," said Cossard, significantly. "Keep them. Buy more if you can."

"But the premium?" cried the count.

"Don't think about it," said Cossard. "If you are determined to sell, I will buy the shares from you at this moment at par ; but you will do wisely to keep them, and I give the same advice to you, messieurs," he added to the two others.

"I have none to sell," laughed De Mille.

"Nor, I," added D'Etampes.

"Then buy—buy!" cried Cossard. "I think I can obtain you a few from M. Laborde. But you will have to pay a hundred per cent. for them.

Still, they are worth it. I wouldn't sell at any price."

"Pray, who is M. Laborde?" inquired De Mille.

"Parbleu! a brother-director," cried Cossard; "a very clever man, and greatly, and I may say deservedly, in Mr. Law's confidence. M. Laborde and myself are the director-general's chief advisers."

"Is Laborde rich?" asked De Mille.

"He is fast becoming so," replied Cossard. "In a few months he will be a millionaire. Poor Laborde! he has known strange changes of fortune. A few years ago he was a great capitalist, but was well-nigh ruined by his scapegrace son, whose debts he paid, and then completely beggared by the Chamber of Justice. Luckily, when things were at the worst, he found a friend in M. Law, who placed him in the Bank, and from that day to this he has prospered."

"His son will help him to spend his money," remarked D'Etampes.

"No he won't, for he has got rid of the rascal," replied Cossard. "Raoul Laborde daren't show his face in Paris. But I ought to tell you, messieurs, that I am about to be married to Laborde's daughter."

"Diable!" cried De Mille. "Is it possible Colombe can have consented to marry you?"

"Quite possible, and, moreover, it is the fact," replied Cossard, somewhat offended. "Owing to the illness of Mademoiselle Laborde the marriage has been delayed, but it will shortly take place. Permit me to observe, Captain de Mille, that it is not agreeable to me to have my intended bride spoken of otherwise than as Mademoiselle Laborde, and I do not imagine there can be any intimacy to warrant the liberty you have taken. Are you acquainted with Mademoiselle Laborde and her father?"

"I knew them formerly," replied De Mille. "In fact, I am a friend of Raoul Laborde—his intimate friend."

“That will scarcely be a recommendation either to father or daughter,” observed Cossard.

“Has Colombe—I mean Mademoiselle Laborde—ever spoken to you of Raoul?” inquired De Mille.

“She never mentions his name,” said Cossard. “But I know what her sentiments are from her father. She does not desire to behold her brother again. But here comes M. Laborde. If you desire to hear his opinion of Raoul, you can easily elicit it.”

“My father!” mentally ejaculated De Mille. “Devil take him! What ill wind blows him here at this moment?”

The situation was trying, and would have embarrassed any one not possessed of strong nerves, but De Mille’s assurance did not desert him. As the elder Laborde approached the table at which Cossard was seated, the latter arose, and while they were exchanging a few words, evidently upon business, the old man’s gaze alighted upon

De Mille, who was sipping his coffee and chatting with the others with an air of the utmost unconcern.

Suddenly pausing in his conversation, Laborde exclaimed, in an altered tone,

“Do my eyes deceive me?—can it be?”

“Yes, yes, my good friend, it is the person you imagine,” replied Cossard. “It is Captain de Mille.”

“De Mille!” ejaculated Laborde. “Is that the name he goes by?”

“I believe so,” returned Cossard, “but I have no acquaintance with him. He has only just come in with the Comte de Horn, and was introduced to me by the Chevalier d’Etampes. If I understood aright, he is an officer of cavalry in the Austrian service.”

At this moment De Mille, who, though apparently paying no attention, had been watching them through the corner of his eye, arose, and, with great nonchalance, said,

“I dare say you don't recollect me, M. Laborde?”

“I do not desire to do so,” replied the old man, endeavouring to control his emotion. “A word with you, Captain de Mille,” he added, stepping aside.

“With pleasure, sir,” replied the other, following him to a corner of the room, where they were out of hearing. “Pray be seated, sir,” he added, offering him a chair; “you will be more at your ease, and we shall attract less attention during our conference. Allow me to offer you a cup of coffee. Garçon, a cup of coffee for monsieur.”

In an instant the fragrant beverage was served, but Laborde did not taste it.

“You have done well to change the name you have dishonoured,” he said. “Is it true you are in the Austrian service?”

“Perfectly true. If you doubt it, ask my brother-officer, the Comte de Horn. I have excel-

lent interest, and am sure to rise. I ought to have your congratulations, sir."

"You shall receive them when you have the command of your regiment," replied Laborde. "Meantime, I will own you have done better than I expected. But it is highly imprudent in you to return to Paris, without permission from the lieutenant-general of police. You are certain to be recognised, and arrested."

"Make yourself easy on that score, sir," replied De Mille. "I am in no danger. I have made my peace with the Regent, and have his highness's safeguard. More than that, I have once more the entrée of the Palais Royal. I am extremely happy to learn, sir, from your friend M. Nicomède Cossard, that you are in such flourishing circumstances, and I trust you won't forget you have a son."

"I have no son," replied Laborde, sternly. "I cast him from me for ever when I stood in the pillory in the Place des Halles, to which he sent

me. Conduct infamous and unnatural as his can never be forgiven. If I meet him, it must be as a stranger."

"Perhaps you may change your mind, sir?"

"Never!" cried Laborde, emphatically. "I repeat, I have no son."

"Pray be calm, sir. I dare say your discarded son will treat your conduct towards him very philosophically, and will be content, since such is your desire, to meet you as a stranger. Addressing you, therefore, as Captain De Mille, may I ask you, as an influential director of the Compagnie d'Occident, to assist me in my speculations?"

"As Captain de Mille, you can have no possible claim on me," replied Laborde, coldly, "and I must decline, therefore, to assist you. In a word, we must not meet again."

"Pardon me, sir," rejoined De Mille. "It is not my intention to part with you thus. We must come to an understanding. If friendly, so much

the better; if the contrary, it cannot be helped. If you reject me as Captain de Mille, I shall be compelled to resume my former appellation, and proclaim myself your son. I fancy you won't like that."

"No, that must not be," thought Laborde, whose trouble did not escape the vigilant eye of his son; "at least, not till after Colombe's marriage. You are right in saying that your resumption of your name would be disagreeable to me," he added, aloud. "It would also be highly prejudicial to yourself."

"Hum! I am not so certain of that," returned the other.

"Your reappearance at this juncture would be a source of great distress to your sister, and might interfere with her marriage with M. Cossard," observed Laborde.

"Aha! I see," thought De Mille. "He wants to keep me quiet, and will naturally make it worth my while to be so. I should like to have a few

shares in the Company, sir," he added, aloud.
"Half a dozen will content me."

"I dare say they would," replied Laborde, dryly.

"But you won't get them from me."

"M. Cossard told me just now that you have a few left."

"But they are promised."

"Promised or not, I must have half a dozen—as the price of my assent to your proposal."

"Well, you shall have them—but only on the express condition that you trouble me no further."

"Agreed!" cried De Mille. "If you do not wish me to call at the Hôtel de Nevers, send them to the Hôtel de Flandres, in the Rue Dauphine, where I lodge with the Comte de Horn and the Chevalier d'Etampes. A propos of M. Cossard, it strikes me he is not exactly the husband for Colombe."

"Colombe is perfectly satisfied," remarked Laborde.

"Oh! I have nothing to say against him," re-

turned De Mille. "I suppose he is very rich, and that is the main point. But I didn't think Colombe would consent to marry him. I fancied her affections might be engaged by that handsome young Englishman, Evelyn Harcourt."

"She had some liking for that young man at one time, but the affair was at an end long before M. Cossard appeared on the scene."

"That was lucky, otherwise Cossard's chance might have been slight. But I am glad things have so turned out. I detest this M. Harcourt. Is he still in Paris?"

"He is," replied Laborde.

"Then I may have the gratification I have long promised myself of cutting his throat," replied De Mille.

"I shouldn't be sorry if you did," observed Laborde, "for Cossard dislikes him, and Colombe, I fear, still cherishes a secret regard for him."

"Something may be made of this," thought De Mille. "Well, sir," he added, "I will try to rid

you of this troublesome gallant, but if I do, I shall expect some acknowledgment of the service."

"You will have little difficulty in meeting him," said Laborde, without noticing the latter part of his son's remark. "He comes daily to this café, and about this hour. I have rarely been here without meeting him."

VI.

CAPTAIN LAMOTHE CADILLAC.

SEVERAL persons at this moment entered the café.

Amongst them was an old man of very striking appearance. He was clad in an antiquated military costume, which might have been in fashion thirty years ago, but was now quite out of date. His features were bronzed, strongly marked, and seamed with scars, his frame gaunt, and his neck long and scraggy. He talked loudly, as if desirous of attracting attention to what he said.

“Voilà! a soldier of Tallard’s day,” exclaimed De Mille. “Who is he?”

“A crack-brained Mississippi captain, named Lamothe Cadillac,” replied Laborde. “He has just returned from Louisiana.”

“Ah! indeed,” cried De Mille. “I should like to hear what he has to say concerning the colony.”

“Then you had better take advantage of the present opportunity, for I don’t think you are likely to meet him again,” said Laborde. “He is employed by the Frères Paris to depreciate the colony, and has come hither for that purpose, but I fancy this will be the last time he will hold forth in public.”

With this he arose, and followed by De Mille, moved towards that part of the room where Cadillac and his friends were seated.

They had selected a table adjoining that occupied by Cossard and the young men with him. Unaware of his danger, the incautious veteran was narrating his experiences of the Mississippi, and

denouncing all Law's brilliant representations of the colony as fables.

"Be cautious, captain," said a person near him. "There is a director of the Compagnie d'Occident at the next table."

"So much the better," replied Captain Lamothe Cadillac, in a loud voice, and levelling his discourse at Cossard. "I repeat, that all the marvels you hear about Louisiana are invented by M. Law to entrap shareholders."

"What is that you are saying about M. Law, sir?" cried Cossard, rising from his seat. "I beg you to understand that I am M. Law's friend, and a director of the Compagnie d'Occident."

"Then, M. le Directeur, it is desirable you should hear the truth," rejoined the veteran. "I, Captain Lamothe Cadillac, have been in Louisiana for the last seventeen years, and I ought to know something of the country, and I affirm that the pompous announcements of M. Law are simple

fabrications, designed to mislead the public. I was employed by Antoine Crozat in that brave man's attempt to colonise the country, and I know to my cost that the enterprise signally failed. Since then, notwithstanding all the statements to the contrary, very little has been done. One day we hear of the departure from Brest or Havre of a fleet laden with merchandise and crowded with colonists. Next day we are told of the arrival of another fleet, bringing millions from the Mississippi. Lies both."

"You are mistaken, captain—you are mistaken," cried Cossard.

"No, M. le Directeur, I am not mistaken," rejoined Cadillac. "The public is duped by these devices. A few weeks ago it was stated—on M. Law's authority—that a silk manufactory had been established, at which twelve thousand Natchez women were employed. A very likely story!" he added, winking at those near him, all of whom

laughed loudly. "A very likely story! I have been in the country, and I never saw three hundred Natchez women got together at any time."

"What say you, captain, to the bullion and ingots of gold and silver discovered in the Mississippi, which have been sent to the Mint to be assayed?" cried Cossard.

"What do I say?" rejoined Cadillac, contemptuously. "I deny it. Gold and silver ingots may have been sent to the Mint, but they didn't come from the Mississippi. There are no precious metals there."

"Perhaps you will say there are no precious stones—no diamonds or rubies, jacinths or agates?" retorted Cossard. "Perhaps you will venture to deny that there is a great rock of emerald in the Arkansas, and that Captain Laharpe, with a detachment of twenty men, has been sent to take possession of it?"

"Pure rodomontade," replied Cadillac. "I should like to see such a rock; but it exists only

in M. Law's imagination. Pay attention, messieurs, and you shall hear the exact truth from me. To begin with, there are no lovely native women ready to rush into the arms of the colonists on their arrival. All the women, young and old, are frightful—savages in every sense. The greater part of the vast region of the Mississippi is a scarcely habitable desert, swampy and desolated by fever, and many years must elapse before it can be colonised and rendered productive. Such, I pledge my word as a man of honour, is the actual condition of the Mississippi country, of which so many wonders, so many falsehoods, are narrated. You see, messieurs," he added, looking round, "what admirable security you have for the money you have invested in the Compagnie d'Occident. Compare my truthful picture with that presented to you by M. Law."

"Your charges are libellous, captain," cried Cossard.

"I can substantiate them," replied the veteran.

“I have heard, since I came back, that a splendid city, called New Orléans, after his highness the Regent, has been built; but as yet the foundations only have been laid by M. Delatour, the engineer.”

“Well, the city *will* be built,” cried Cossard; “and a splendid city New Orléans will be when finished—one of the finest cities in the world. I wonder, while denying all the natural resources of the Louisiana, that you do not aver that the Mississippi is no larger than the Seine.”

“The great Father of Waters would give me the lie if I did!” cried Cadillac. “There is no river like the Mississippi.”

“I’m surprised you make the admission,” said Cossard.

At this juncture, Laborde made a sign to Cossard, and quitted the café.

Nothing more passed for a few moments, when Cadillac, having swallowed his coffee, returned to

the charge. Cossard, however, interrupted him, and said:

“I warn you not to give too much licence to your tongue, sir.”

“Bah! I am not to be intimidated,” said the veteran. “I shall speak the truth, regardless of consequences. It is my duty to set the public right, and show them how they have been gulled.”

At this moment, an exempt of police entered the café, and marching straight to the table at which the veteran was seated, touched him on the shoulder, saying,

“You are Captain Lamothe Cadillac, I believe?”

“At your service, sir.”

The exempt whispered a word in the veteran’s ear.

“Arrested!” exclaimed Cadillac, starting to his feet.

Great consternation was caused among Cadillac’s

friends at this unexpected event; but no interference in the veteran's behalf was attempted. The party, however, at the adjoining table appeared amused by the incident.

"Adieu, captain!" cried Cossard, in a jeering tone. "I hope you will find a comfortable cell in the Bastille. You can there rail away at your leisure."

"I would rather be taken to the Bastille than be sent back to the Mississippi," retorted Cadillac. "Adieu, messieurs!" he added, looking round at his friends. "You see how they treat an old soldier, who has bled for his country, and whose only offence is speaking the truth."

"Adieu, mon brave!—au revoir, capitaine!" they cried, embracing him, and grasping his hand.

"Follow me, captain," said the exempt, anxious to put an end to the scene.

"One moment, sir, I beg of you," implored the veteran. "I have a parting word to say to my friends."

"I cannot allow it, captain," said the officer, peremptorily; "you have already trespassed too much on my patience. Allons!"

And he turned to depart, but found himself checked by Harcourt, who, having entered the café at the moment the veteran's arrest took place, had drawn near to ascertain what was taking place.

The exempt motioned him to stand out of the way, but Evelyn maintained his ground.

"You will not refuse the old man's request?" he said to the officer. "Allow him to speak."

"What means this interference, sir?" cried the exempt, sternly. "Do you dare to molest me in the discharge of my duty? Stand aside, at your peril!"

Just then, however, his attention was drawn to Cadillac, who, taking advantage of the interruption, had leaped upon a chair, in order to address the assemblage. The veteran's friends quickly

gathered round him, so that the exempt could not get near to dislodge him.

“This is all your doing, sir,” cried the officer of police to Evelyn. “If any disturbance occurs, you will be responsible for it.”

“Don’t be uneasy, sir, no disturbance will occur,” cried Cadillac, from his exalted position. “As soon as I have said a word to the company, I will attend you quietly. Hear me, messieurs,” he added, raising his voice, “I am to be shut up in the Bastille, because it is inconvenient to M. Law that the true condition of the colony of the Mississippi should be known to the public. Not able to make me hold my tongue, M. Law has had recourse to this expedient. But I appeal to you whether imprisonment is a fitting recompense for an old soldier, who has served his country faithfully? Look here,” he added, baring his breast, “here are the marks of the wounds I received at Fleury, when we defeated the Dutch. This scar was given me at Mons—this at the siege of

Namur—this at Huy. I was complimented for my bravery by Marshals Luxembourg and Boufflers; but that was the sole reward I obtained. I have been seventeen years in the Mississippi, and have spent more than half the time with the Red Indians, accompanying them on their hunting expeditions, and during their wars with hostile tribes, so that I am well acquainted with the whole region; and I confidently affirm that years, many years, must elapse ere it can be inhabited by any other than its present savage denizens. There are no precious metals to be found there, no precious stones; but there are plenty of alligators in the rivers, plenty of wild beasts in the forests, plenty of fevers to be got in the marshes. Had I not possessed a frame of iron I should have perished long ago. It is because I am convinced that the colony will not prosper in our time, though it may do so hereafter, that I have lifted up the voice of warning. Antoine Crozat's enterprise failed—so will Jean Law's. The scheme will prove

ruinous to all who have embarked in it. Unable to controvert my statements, or to bribe me to silence, the director-general of the Compagnie d'Occident sends me to the Bastille. He may continue to dupe the shareholders. He may persuade them that all the riches of Mexico and Peru are to be found in the Mississippi, but the truth will at last come out, and then—though too late!—my warning will be recollected!”

Loud murmurs arose from the group around him, and maledictions were uttered against Law.

“Be not unjust, messieurs,” said Evelyn. “I am sure M. Law can never have counselled this severe measure.”

“The measure is necessary, sir,” cried Cossard. “It is by M. Law’s order that Cadillac is arrested.”

“I am unwilling to believe it, even on your authority, sir,” rejoined Evelyn.

“By whom was the lettre de cachet for Captain

Lamothe Cadillac's arrest delivered to you, sir?" said Cossard to the exempt.

"By M. Laborde, who had it from M. Law," replied the officer.

"Are you satisfied now, sir?" said Cossard to Evelyn.

The young man made no reply, but his countenance showed he was much grieved.

"I have been detained here long enough," said the exempt. "Are you coming, Cadillac? Or must I call in the guard, and take you hence by force?"

"A word more, and I have done," replied the veteran. "I am grateful for the sympathy manifested in my behalf by that young gentleman," he added, looking towards Evelyn, "and I hope his generosity may not do him a mischief. Au revoir, mes amis! If I am only to be kept in the Bastille till this Mississippi bubble bursts, I shall be speedily liberated."

With this he descended, and his friends separating to let him pass, he followed the exempt out of the café, marching with head erect, and with firm footstep.

At the door was a public coach, and near it were drawn up a dozen archers of the guard. The prisoner having been placed in this vehicle by the exempt, who seated himself beside him, one of the archers mounted the box, and bade the coachman drive to the Bastille.

VII.

HOW CAPTAIN DE MILLE AND M. NICOMÈDE COSSARD CAME
TO AN UNDERSTANDING.

NO one who witnessed the occurrence just related was more painfully affected by it than Evelyn Harcourt. After watching the brave old soldier march out to prison, he threw himself into a chair, and for a short time was lost in painful thought. He was roused by loud laughter, which sounded discordantly in his ears, and looking in the direction whence it proceeded, his eye fell upon Cossard.

As may be imagined, the wealthy director, who

had robbed him of her he loved best, was an object of extraordinary aversion to Evelyn, and whenever they met the young man had to put strong constraint upon himself to avoid insulting his rival. On his part, Cossard detested Evelyn quite as much as Evelyn detested him, but he was far too careful of his personal safety to hazard a quarrel. He abominated duelling, and so pacific was his disposition that it may be questioned whether a coup de bâton or even a coup de pied would have caused him to fight.

Of course, Cossard was quite aware that an attachment had subsisted between his promised bride and Evelyn, and he more than suspected that she still cherished a regard for her former lover, but he did not give himself much anxiety on this score, as he had no fear of losing her. Colombe avoided him as much as possible, and never would be alone with him, and her deportment towards him was such that it was impossible, notwithstanding his self-esteem, that he could flatter himself that she

loved him. But this did not trouble him more than her suspected attachment to Evelyn.

It was not Cossard's fault, and certainly not Laborde's, that the marriage had not taken place long ago. But owing to one circumstance or other it had been constantly delayed, and even now no day was fixed for the ceremony. Colombe had always a fresh excuse for its postponement, and though her father's patience was nearly worn out by her foolish whims, as he termed them, he was obliged to yield. Had he not been greatly engrossed at the time by the affairs of the *Compagnie d'Occident*, he might not have been so good natured. Meantime, Cossard was assiduous in his attentions, and strove to win the favour of his intended bride by magnificent presents. He was continually sending her diamond rings, necklaces, and bracelets, with other costly ornaments, none of which, even at her father's instance, could she be induced to wear. Indeed, it was with great reluctance that she accepted them. These presents,

however, gave great delight to little Catherine Law, who was never tired of examining them, and she declared that Colombe's diamonds were much handsomer than her mamma's. We must not omit to mention that, although Colombe had found it absolutely impossible to conquer her attachment to Evelyn, she had never exchanged a word with him in private, nor had any letters passed between them. They met occasionally in society, but that was all.

Such was the actual state of affairs between the rivals when they met in the Café Procope on the day in question.

While glancing at Cossard, Evelyn for the first time noticed De Mille, and at once recognised him, but almost doubting the evidence of his senses, he got up and drew a little nearer to the table to make sure he was not mistaken.

"Is that a friend of yours, mon cher?" said the Comte de Horn to De Mille. "He stares very hard at you."

Surveying Evelyn impertinently from head to foot, De Mille replied,

“No, I have not the honour of his acquaintance.”

“He is an Englishman, named Harcourt,” whispered Cossard. “Don’t provoke him. He is apt to be quarrelsome.”

“Ah, is he so?” cried De Mille. “Then he is fortunate in meeting with one who is as ready to quarrel as himself. Permit me to remark, sir,” he added to Evelyn, “that I find your manner of looking at me offensive—excessively offensive—and I must beg you to desist, and relieve us from your presence.”

“Pray do not let there be any misunderstanding between you, messieurs,” interposed Cossard. “Clearly there is some mistake, which I may be able to rectify. Possibly you may not be aware, M. Harcourt, of the rank and position of these gentlemen, and therefore I will take leave to mention that this is the Comte de Horn, this the Che-

valier d'Etampes, and this gentleman, whom you have been looking at, is Captain De Mille."

"We have all just arrived from Brussels," observed the Comte de Horn. "And I scarcely think M. Harcourt can have seen any of us before."

"It is very strange," thought Evelyn, staggered. "The face, the figure, the voice, the manner are all the same as Raoul Laborde's. And yet if it were he, he would not be here with Cossard. I am now sensible of my error," he added, aloud; "but I took Captain De Mille for another person whom he strongly resembles."

"Ha! ha! there are a great many curious resemblances," laughed Cossard. "I have frequently been mistaken for somebody else, myself. Captain De Mille, I am quite sure, will be satisfied with the explanation. Pray sit down, M. Harcourt."

Evelyn, however, declined, and bowing some-

what haughtily to the young men, who returned his salutation in the same stately way, he moved off, and presently left the café.

“Why the devil did you interfere, M. Cossard?” observed De Mille, as soon as Evelyn was gone. “That cursed puppy ought to have had his ears cropped for his impertinence.”

“If you are bent upon fighting him, you will easily find an opportunity of doing so,” returned the other. “But I do not desire to be mixed up in a duel.”

“Pardieu! I shan’t be easy till I have settled accounts with him,” said De Mille.

“I should be sorry to hinder you,” rejoined Cossard. “Between ourselves, this young Englishman is personally disagreeable to me. I’ll tell you why, on some other occasion.”

“I’m already in the secret,” said De Mille. “M. Laborde gave me a hint just now. Step this way, sir,” he added, taking Cossard aside. “Unless

that young man is removed, Mademoiselle Laborde will never be yours. He is a more serious obstacle in your path than you imagine."

"There may be some truth in what you say," rejoined Cossard, carelessly. "I never viewed the matter in that light. Still, I must own that circumstances seem to bear you out."

"I have it from M. Laborde, who *must* know," remarked De Mille. "This young Harcourt is the great bar to your union with Mademoiselle Laborde."

"Deuce take him! I wish he were back in England," cried Cossard.

"He may go there, and take your intended bride with him," said De Mille.

"Sacrebleu! that mustn't be."

"Of course not. You won't fight him, I suppose."

"My position won't allow me. Besides, I have a vow against duelling."

“Then I am your man. I’ll fight him for you. And, what is more, I’ll kill him,” said De Mille.

“Stay!” exclaimed Cossard. “I have a better plan than that. We’ll ruin him. I’ll show you how to do it, and make your own fortune at the same time.”

“A merveille!” exclaimed De Mille. “That plan is infinitely preferable to the other. Count upon me. There’s my hand.”

VIII.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN M. LABORDE AND LADY CATHERINE
LAW.

COLOMBE and little Kate were alone together in a room opening upon the charming garden at the back of the Hôtel Law, when M. Laborde came in, carrying a red velvet écrin, which instantly attracted the attention of the younger lady.

“Bonjour, M. Laborde!” she cried, saluting him. “I see you have brought Colombe something pretty from M. Cossard.”

“How do you know that, mademoiselle?” he

rejoined. "Perhaps I have brought a present for you."

"Oh no! I'm sure you have not; but do let me look at it. Oh! how very beautiful!" she exclaimed, as he opened the casket, and displayed its contents to her admiring gaze. "Do look here, Colombe! Here is the loveliest pearl necklace you ever beheld. Let me show it to her," she added, snatching the box from Laborde, and taking it to Colombe. "Isn't it exquisite? Aren't you very much obliged to your dear Nicomède? And won't you do him the favour to wear it?" she added, roguishly.

"Put it down, darling, please," remarked Colombe, without bestowing a look at the necklace, which really deserved the praise lavished on it by little Kate.

"Have you brought anything else, M. Laborde?" inquired Kate, as she complied with the request.

"What more would you have?" he returned.

“A necklace like that, which cost two thousand livres, is enough for one day. But if Colombe has a fancy for any other ornament, M. Cossard will be enchanted to send it her.”

“What a delightful man he is!” exclaimed Kate. “But, unluckily, all his presents are thrown away upon Colombe, for she won’t look at any of them. Do just try on this necklace?” she added, in a coaxing tone. “I’m sure it will become you so much.”

“Pray don’t ask me, child. I won’t touch it. If you think the necklace pretty, you are welcome to it.”

“No, no, you mustn’t part with it!—must she, M. Laborde?”

“What folly is this, Colombe?” cried Laborde. “M. Cossard will naturally be offended if he hears what little store you set upon his gifts. His great desire is to please you.”

“Then let him cease to make me presents,” re-

joined Colombe. "Instead of gratifying me, they cause me annoyance."

"Cause you annoyance, Colombe!" cried Kate. "Oh! that is impossible. Mamma says M. Cossard has most exquisite taste in jewels. She admires everything he has sent you, diamonds, lace, and dresses. She was talking to papa only yesterday about your magnificent veil, and asking him to buy her one like it."

"I wish I might give her mine," said Colombe. "I shall never wear it."

"Oh yes!" cried Kate. "You will wear it on your wedding-day."

"You are right, my dear," observed Laborde. "It is meant for that happy occasion."

"Happy occasion!" mentally ejaculated Colombe. "To me it will be the most wretched day of my life. I cannot think of it without horror."

"You don't like to talk of your marriage, I know, Colombe, so I won't tease you any more

about it," said Kate. "I only wish, for your sake, that M. Cossard were half as nice as his presents. I'll come back in a moment."

And she quitted the room.

"Come and sit down beside me, Colombe," said her father, as soon as they were alone. "I must chide you for your silly conduct. You make it evident to all, even to that child, that you dislike your intended husband. As you cannot retract the promise you have given him, such a display of repugnance is exceedingly indiscreet."

"I cannot help it, papa. I have promised to marry M. Cossard, and I will marry him. But I can't pretend to like him. Pray don't let him send me any more presents."

"Nonsense, child, I can't prevent him. You are the first woman I ever heard of who made such an absurd request. Cossard is generous as a prince, and I wouldn't for the world hurt him by hinting that his presents are not acceptable. But a truce to this. I have disagreeable news for

you. Whom do you think I met yesterday at the Café Procope?"

"Not Raoul, I hope?" she cried.

"You have guessed right—'twas he. To my infinite surprise and annoyance I found him seated with Cossard, who, however, is ignorant of his real name, and I hope will remain so. Raoul now calls himself Captain de Mille, and, if he is to be believed, is an officer of cavalry in the Austrian service. The Regent, it appears, has removed the prohibition against his return to Paris, and given him a safeguard against arrest by the police. I wish I could add that he is improved in character as in position. He looks well enough, is richly dressed, and has for companions two young men of rank, the Comte de Horn and the Chevalier d'Etampes—but, like Raoul himself, they have both a dissolute air."

"Had you any private conversation with Raoul, papa?" asked Colombe.

"Not much, but enough to convince me he

is unchanged. During the brief interview I had with him, his sole object was to extort money from me, and were I weak enough to yield, as I once did, his demands would increase. What sin have I committed," he added, with a groan, "that I should be cursed with such a son? He has been the bane of my life, and now that I have raised myself from the miserable condition in which he plunged me by his infamous conduct, he comes to destroy my peace!"

And he turned away, and buried his face in his hands.

After a pause he added, in a voice of anguish, "The unnatural wretch will bring shame and sorrow upon me. He has already broken his mother's heart, and he will break mine."

"Be comforted, father, and think no more of him. It is well for us that he has changed his name."

"Better if he had changed his nature," cried Laborde, "but the Ethiop might as well seek to

alter his hue as Raoul to become honest. He has fastened himself upon Cossard, and, like a blood-sucker, will not drop off till the veins of his victim are emptied."

"If you really believe this, father, it is your duty to warn M. Cossard," said Colombe. "If you do not like the task, leave it to me."

"No, no—not yet," cried Laborde, hastily. "When you are married you can tell all to your husband."

"But M. Cossard ought to know it now," said Colombe.

"I peremptorily forbid you to speak to him on the subject," cried her father. "Colombe, there must be no further delay in your marriage. Raoul's reappearance renders this necessary. When you are settled, I shall feel easy."

Before Colombe could return an answer, a lacquey in a rich livery entered, and told Laborde that Lady Catherine Law would be glad to speak with him. On this, Laborde arose, and bidding

his daughter think over what he had said to her, he followed the lacquey to a large and superbly-furnished salon, in which he found Lady Catherine alone.

Her ladyship, as we have already mentioned, still retained her good looks, and full effect was given to her stately and imposing figure by the magnificent attire in which she was arrayed. She did not rise on Laborde's entrance, but received him graciously, yet with a certain distance and haughtiness.

"I have sent for you, M. Laborde," she observed, "because I have a few words to say in reference to Colombe. You know how fondly attached I am to her. It is not saying too much to assert that I love her as well as my own daughter."

"Your ladyship need not give me that assurance," said Laborde, who did not like this commencement, and suspected what was coming. "You have fully proved it."

"I am about to prove it more strongly now,"

rejoined Lady Catherine. "The marriage agreed upon between Colombe and M. Cossard offers some advantages, but I begin to think it ought not to take place."

"Ah! now it comes," thought Laborde. "Even if I concurred with your ladyship in opinion—and I am obliged to differ from you—the affair has proceeded too far to be broken off," he added, aloud. "I cannot, in honour, retreat."

"I see the difficulty, but, where Colombe's happiness is at stake, no other consideration ought to have weight. She has made no complaint to me, but I am sure she suffers greatly, and I am equally sure her recent illness is attributable to this cause. You cannot desire to force her inclinations, and make her miserable."

"Certainly not, miladi," replied Laborde. "I am satisfied I am promoting her happiness by giving her to a worthy man, and I am supported in my opinion by M. Law, who highly approves the match, and has more than once told me that

I may esteem myself singularly fortunate in marrying my daughter so well."

"I am quite aware that my husband approves the match," returned Lady Catherine, "and so should I, if I thought Colombe would be happy—but I do not. You must give her another month's respite, M. Laborde."

"I don't see how I can do so, miladi. M. Cosard is growing impatient. Indeed, for many reasons, I am anxious to hasten on the marriage rather than delay it. I have just told Colombe so."

"M. Laborde," said Lady Catherine, "the marriage must be postponed for a month."

"Impossible, miladi."

"But I say it must," she rejoined, in a tone that did not admit of dispute. "During that time I will exert all the influence I possess over Colombe to reconcile her to the match."

"I am under too many obligations to your ladyship to refuse any request you may make of me," replied Laborde, "but I fear Colombe will

be just as reluctant to fulfil her engagement a month hence as she is now."

"I think I can promise that she will be prepared to obey you," rejoined Lady Catherine. "But you must be aware that her heart has been given to another."

"I hoped she had long since conquered her silly passion for Evelyn Harcourt," said Laborde.

"She has striven hard to do so, but unsuccessfully," replied Lady Catherine. "Tell me, M. Laborde, what is your objection to that young man?"

"I have no particular objection to him, miladi, except that he is poor."

"But you are rich enough to make your daughter happy by giving her to the only person she can love?"

"My word is pledged to M. Cossard, and is irrevocable. But even if this engagement did not subsist, I would not give my daughter to Evelyn Harcourt. I accede to your ladyship's request to

postpone the marriage for a month, but, at the expiration of that time, it must take place, and I rely upon your kind promise to prepare Colombe for it."

With this he bowed, and quitted the room.

"Poor Colombe!" sighed Lady Catherine, as she was left alone. "She must not be thus sacrificed. M. Law supports this odious Cossard, and desires me not to interfere, but in a case like this I shall not heed the injunction. If I can hinder it, the marriage shall not take place."

IX.

HOW EVELYN BECAME A SPECULATOR.

COLOMBE was alone in a large and superbly-furnished salon in the Hôtel Law, when, to her infinite surprise, Evelyn Harcourt was announced.

“Pardon me, mademoiselle,” he said, as soon as the lacquy retired, “I am permitted by Lady Catherine Law thus to present myself. I am about to return to England, and have come to take leave of you—perhaps for ever!” he added, with irrepressible emotion.

“Are you returning to England?” said Colombe, scarcely able to control the agitation caused

by this unlooked-for announcement. "I thought you preferred Paris to London. You told me so, I remember."

"At that time I did prefer it," he replied; "and if those days could be revived, I should prefer it still. But they are gone, and all that made this city so bright and pleasant to me is fled. I have relinquished my post as attaché to Lord Stair, and, though he is unwilling to accept my resignation, I shall go. With change of scene I may possibly regain the happiness I have lost."

"Are you unhappy, then?" said Colombe.

"Can you ask it?" he replied, bitterly. "Can you suppose that under the circumstances in which I am placed I can be otherwise than wretched—most wretched? Do you imagine I can forget the past? But what is my misery to you? You heed it not. You have ceased to think of me."

"It is cruel in you to say so, Evelyn," she rejoined. "You well know I can never cease to take the deepest interest in you."

“Excuse me, mademoiselle. I am unable to credit what you say. If you really cared for me, you could not have acted as you have done. But it is neither to reproach you, nor to move your compassion by referring to my own sufferings, that I am come here now. I simply wished to bid you farewell before my departure. May you be happy, Colombe!”

“Oh! do not distress me thus!” she cried, entirely losing her self-control, “or you will break my heart. Why should you leave Paris?”

“Because I could not bear to see you wedded to another. I must fly before the ceremony takes place.”

“But it may never take place,” she remarked.

“What do I hear?” he exclaimed. “Is there a chance that this hateful marriage may be broken off? I thought it inevitable. Are you not plighted to this man? Do not awaken hopes that may never be realised. By dooming me to fresh disappointment you will render my anguish insup-

portable. Oh! Colombe, are you not irrevocably bound to Cossard?"

"I am not," she replied, firmly. "And I never will marry him."

Transported with joy, Evelyn threw himself on his knee before her, and pressed her hand to his lips.

"You have changed my whole existence by a word," he cried, as he rose to his feet. "This decides me. I will stay—I will not leave Paris. As soon as you permit me to do so, I will ask your hand from your father."

"You will ask it in vain," she replied. "My father is resolved to marry me to a millionaire. He has told me so repeatedly of late. Were you rich, you might possibly gain his consent, but as it is, he will not listen to you."

"Then I will become rich," cried Evelyn. "In these days fortunes are made in an incredibly short space of time. I will go to the Rue Quincampoix, and speculate as others do. If I prosper, you will

soon see me again. If I do not reappear in a few days, you will understand what has happened."

"Since you are resolved to speculate, I can assist you," said Colombe. "I have a hundred shares in the Compagnie d'Occident, which were given to me by Lady Catherine Law. You shall have them."

"I cannot accept the gift—even from you, Colombe," he replied, reddening.

"If your pride will not allow you to accept them, you can buy them," she said.

"But I have not a hundred thousand livres," he rejoined.

"That is not what I meant," she said. And, unlocking a casket which stood upon the table, she took a porte-feuille from it. "This pocket-book contains the shares," she added, giving it to him. "You must sell fifty for me at a thousand livres the share. All above that amount is to be yours. Are you content?"

"I will do as you tell me," he rejoined. "But

there will be fifty left. What must I do with them?"

"Keep them," she returned. "They are certain to rise in value. But understand, sell for what they may hereafter, you are only to account to me for their present price. No objections—unless you would offend me."

Before Evelyn could return an answer, the door was opened, and Lady Catherine Law and M. Cossard entered.

While saluting Colombe, Cossard took her hand and raised it to his lips—a ceremony to which she evidently submitted with a very ill grace. This done, he addressed himself to Evelyn, and after bowing to him with formal politeness, observed,

"Lady Catherine Law tells me we are about to lose you, M. Harcourt. You mean to return to England, I believe?"

"My plans are undecided, sir," replied Harcourt. "Perhaps I may stay a few weeks longer."

"I am glad to hear it," said Cossard, whose

looks belied his words. "I have just brought Lady Catherine a very important piece of intelligence, which you will be pleased to hear," he added. "The power and extent of our Company has this day been extraordinarily augmented. Already we possessed America, and now we have Asia and Africa. Without exaggeration, I may say the whole ocean belongs to us, since we have the monopoly of the world's commerce."

"How can this be, sir, may I venture to ask?" inquired Evelyn.

"To make the matter clear to you," replied Cossard, "I must explain that up to this period the monopoly of the East Indian trade has belonged to the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, established by Colbert in 1664, but its affairs having been badly administered, its commerce has languished for many years, and the enterprise would most probably have been abandoned, if M. Law, who felt the importance of the *Indes Orientales*, had not solicited its concession from

the Regent, engaging to pay the debts of the company, and actively carry on its trade. This very day, as I have intimated, Colbert's company has been dissolved, and the monopoly, with all its rights and privileges, assigned to M. Law. An immediate amalgamation will be made between the Orient and the Occident, and the latter will henceforth be denominated the *Compagnie des Indes*."

"A proud designation indeed!" exclaimed Evelyn. "Conducted by M. Law, the enterprise cannot fail of success."

"By this new and great acquisition," pursued Cossard, "M. Law will have the sole right of trading with all the ports of the Pacific Ocean, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Straits of Magellan. Furthermore, he will have the exclusive right of trading with the East Indies, Mogul, Persia, Siam, China, and Japan, of visiting the coasts of the Red Sea, and of frequenting

the Isles of Madagascar, Bourbon, and France. As you must be aware, he had previously purchased the Company of Senegal, which gave him the sole right of buying slaves, hides, elephants' tusks, and gold-dust, from Cape Bianco to Sierra Leone. I have not, therefore, affirmed too much in declaring that the *Compagnie des Indes* will monopolise the trade of the whole world."

"An immense monopoly indeed!" exclaimed Evelyn. "But an enormous capital will be required to pay the debts of the dissolved company and carry on its trade."

"Many millions, no doubt; but M. Law will easily find the amount," replied Cossard.

"I am curious to know in what way?" said Evelyn.

"I will tell you, for there is no secret about it, as the edict will be published to-morrow," returned Cossard. "M. Law is empowered by the Regent to issue fifty thousand new shares of five hundred

livres each, payable in specie, by which a fund of twenty-five millions will be secured."

"Provided all the shares are sold," remarked Evelyn.

"Of that there is no fear," rejoined Cossard. "The difficulty will be to procure them, as you will find if you make the experiment. The shares of the Occident are already above par. Those of the new company will soon be in the same position. Before a month, I believe they will have doubled or trebled in value. Now mark well what I am going to tell you. M. Law is about to issue a decree which will have an extraordinary effect upon the original shares of the Occident, and cause them to be run after with the greatest avidity. To entitle a speculator to subscribe for one new share, he must possess four old shares. The result of this must necessarily be to increase enormously the value of the old shares, and the person who holds many of them may think himself lucky.

For example, the possessor of a hundred will be able to realise two hundred thousand livres."

"You hear that," remarked Colombe, in a low voice, to Evelyn.

"On the publication of this decree," observed Cossard, with a laugh, "the actions d'Occident will be termed *les Mères*, and the new shares *les Filles*—ha! ha!"

"Very appropriate designations," observed Evelyn. "Apparently there is a brilliant prospect for the holders of the original shares."

"Magnificent! unequalled!" exclaimed Cossard. "It is a pity you have none, M. Harcourt."

"You are mistaken, sir. I am in a condition to subscribe for twenty-five new shares."

"The deuce you are!" exclaimed Cossard, looking surprised and annoyed. "How on earth did you contrive to get a hundred Occidents?"

"Never mind how I got them," replied Evelyn, taking out the porte-feuille. "Here they are."

“I'll give you two hundred thousand livres for them at once, if you are inclined to sell,” said Cossard.

Evelyn consulted Colombe by a glance, and as she seemed to counsel him to accede, he said, “A bargain! For two hundred thousand livres they are yours. Pray count the shares,” he added, handing him the porte-feuille.

“All perfectly right,” replied Cossard, examining the actions with great rapidity. “The affair can be settled in a moment, for, luckily, I happen to have a considerable sum about me.”

So saying, he produced a large rouleau of billets de banque, and after counting the number required, handed them with a polite bow to Evelyn.

“We ought to apologise to the ladies,” he said, “for transacting business in their presence in this manner, but the circumstances will plead our excuse.”

“No apology is necessary, sir,” remarked Lady Catherine Law, who had been conversing in a low

tone with Colombe while the transaction took place. "I am too much accustomed to incidents of this sort to heed them."

"No doubt, miladi, no doubt," laughed Cossard.

At this moment the double door of the salon was thrown open by a couple of splendidly-attired lacqueys, while M. Thierry, the major-domo, in a loud voice announced his Highness the Duc de Bourbon and the Marquise de Prie.

X.

ADVICE FROM A WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

As these distinguished persons entered, Lady Catherine advanced to meet them, and received them with great ceremony. Before these formalities were concluded, Law himself made his appearance, evidently to the great satisfaction of the duke, who, it turned out, desired to subscribe for a large number of shares in the new *Compagnie des Indes*. Law professed himself most anxious to oblige his highness, but said so many actions had

been allotted in the first instance to the Regent, that he had but a few at his own disposal.

“But, if I recollect right, monseigneur,” he said, “you have eight hundred shares in the Occident. These will entitle you to subscribe for two hundred *filles*, as the new actions are to be designated. But if I may be permitted to advise your highness, you will only subscribe for half that number, and retain four hundred for future use. You will find your account in doing so. By judiciously negotiating your shares,” he added, in a low voice, “you ought to realise eight or ten millions.”

“I will follow your advice, M. Law,” said the duke.

“M. Law,” said the Marquise de Prie, “I understand you have given your new shares the pretty name of *filles*. I should not object to a large family of this sort—not even to a hundred *filles*.”

“But, Madame la Marquise,” rejoined Law,

“by our arrangements, one mother can only have four daughters. Consequently, you will require four hundred *mères* to produce a hundred *filles*, and, I am sorry to say, they are not to be had.”

“But I shall go distracted if I do not get some,” cried the marchioness. “You must let me have a hundred.”

“I am extremely sorry, madame, but it is out of my power to oblige you,” said Law. “M. Cossard, one of our directors, will tell you that the *mères* are now worth a hundred per cent. premium.”

“You won’t obtain them at that price from any broker in the Rue Quincampoix, Madame la Marquise,” said Cossard. “But I have a hundred which I will sell for four hundred thousand livres.”

“They are mine at the price,” cried the marchioness, eagerly. “Have you got them with you?”

“Here they are, Madame la Marquise,” replied

Cossard, producing the porte-feuille. "Pray count them, madame—pray count them."

"I trust to your honour, sir," she cried. "I am sure you would not deceive me. M. le Duc, be pleased to pay M. Cossard four hundred thousand livres."

"Diable!" exclaimed the duke, testily; "it is a large sum. I have not so much about me."

"My porte-feuille is at your service, madame," said Law.

"You are excessively obliging, M. Law," she replied. "Do me the great favour to pay M. Cossard, and M. le Duc will repay you."

"Don't repay me, madame, for a month," said Law, "and in that time I hope you will have trebled or quadrupled the amount you have borrowed."

"You transact business en grand seigneur, M. Law," said the marchioness, smiling. "And now I must have a word with you, mignonne," she added, taking Colombe aside. "How is it that I

find M. Harcourt here?" she added, in a low voice. "Has any change taken place in the marriage arrangements, eh?"

"No, madame," replied Colombe. "My father continues inflexible, but I am resolved not to marry M. Cossard."

"Reflect a little before you come to that decision, child," replied the marchioness. "You know I love you dearly, and may believe me when I say, it will be best to yield obedience to your father's injunctions."

"And marry M. Cossard! Impossible, Madame la Marquise."

"Listen to me, Colombe. This Cossard, whom you would cast away, will make an excellent husband. I have spoken to M. Law about him, and he assures me he is immensely rich—rich enough to buy a title—so your position in society will be assured. You will tell me you cannot bear him—that you love another—that you will be

miserable, and so forth. Sottises! No young and beautiful woman, with a rich husband, can be unhappy. If you don't agree with me now, you will do so hereafter."

"You employ the same arguments as my father, Madame la Marquise, and I must reply to you as I did to him, that I do not care for money."

"You fancy not, my dear child," rejoined the marchioness; "but you are entirely mistaken. I had once such silly ideas myself, but they have long since flown. Believe me, M. Cossard is the husband for you. To M. Harcourt I have several objections. I won't specify them now, but I am sure he wouldn't make you happy. He will never be devoted to you."

"You judge him as my father judges him—from report," said Colombe.

"No, I judge him from what I have seen," rejoined the marchioness. "I could never forgive perfidy in a lover. I remember how passionately

enamoured he was of the Duchesse de Berri. And if death had not snatched her away he would still be bound in her fetters."

"Don't speak of her, I pray you, madame," said Colombe, becoming agitated. "I would willingly forget the pain she caused me."

"Perhaps you will try to persuade me you were grieved by her death?" said the marchioness, rather maliciously.

"I was indeed grieved that one so beautiful and highly gifted should perish in her pride," replied Colombe. "The duchess had caused me great anguish, but, when I heard she was no more, my heart instantly melted, and I forgave her all."

"I cannot lay claim to so much amiability," rejoined the marchioness. "However, we will say no more about the poor duchess; but, I am bound to add, she is not the only one of the court beauties who has captivated your fickle M. Harcourt."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Colombe, her agitation increasing.

“I won't pain you by any disclosures,” said the marchioness; “but I advise you to think twice before you abandon M. Cossard for one on the stability of whose affection you can have no sort of dependence.”

“I begin to think you are right,” sighed Colombe. “After all, it would have been better if he had returned to England.”

“Far better for you, undoubtedly,” said the marchioness. “And so you have foolishly persuaded him to stay?”

Colombe made no reply.

At this juncture, Thierry suddenly entered, and informed Law that his royal highness the Regent had just arrived, and was alighting from his carriage.

“Pray excuse me, M. le Duc. I fly to receive his highness!” cried Law, hastily quitting the room.

XI.

OF THE CONGRATULATORY VISIT PAID BY THE REGENT TO
LADY CATHERINE LAW.

LAW found the Regent in the vestibule, and, after expressing his great gratification at the honour conferred upon him, he ceremoniously conducted his illustrious visitor to the salon in which he had left Lady Catherine Law and the rest of the company.

Nothing could be more affable than the Regent's deportment towards Lady Catherine, and, after graciously returning the reverences paid him by the others, he said:

“I have come, Lady Catherine, to offer you, in person, my congratulations on the wonderful success that has attended your husband’s great financial operations. He has achieved what no minister of finance has been able to accomplish—he has saved us from ruin—and restored the country to a state of unexampled prosperity.”

Highly gratified, as may well be supposed, Lady Catherine acknowledged the compliment in suitable terms, and, when she had done, Law likewise expressed his thanks:

“Your highness has been pleased to give me credit for what I have done,” he said, “but my operations have only just commenced. I hope to put the country in a higher position than it has ever yet attained, and enable it to give the law to the rest of the world. There shall be but one great kingdom in Europe—France—and one great city, Paris.”

“Ainsi soit il!” exclaimed the Regent, well pleased.

“If you go on as you have begun, M. Law,” remarked the Duc de Bourbon, “you will be able to ruin the credit of England whenever you please, break its banks, and annihilate its great East India Company.”

“If I cannot do all this, M. le Duc, I can, at all events, bring down the English East India stock,” replied Law, laughing; “and that I engage to do, as soon as the Compagnie des Indes is in full operation.”

“You forget, M. Law, that there is an Englishman present,” remarked the good-natured Regent, glancing at Evelyn. “Your determination cannot be very agreeable to him.”

“I do not feel any great uneasiness, monseigneur,” replied Evelyn, who overheard the remark. “Our East India directors, I fancy, will know how to take care of themselves. But I began to think M. Law had forgotten his native land.”

“Ma foi! my interests are so identified with

those of France, that I am at heart a Frenchman," rejoined Law.

"We must make you one," said the Regent. "There is but one difficulty—your religion."

"And that is insuperable, monseigneur," observed Lady Catherine.

The Regent cast a significant glance at Law but made no remark.

"Surely that charming face is not unknown to me!" pursued the prince, for the first time noticing Colombe, who was standing near the Marquise de Prie. "Is it not Mademoiselle Laborde?"

"Your highness has an excellent memory where a pretty face is concerned," replied Law, presenting Colombe, who blushed deeply as she bent to the Regent. "Mademoiselle Laborde is about to be married very shortly."

"Ah! indeed. Accept my congratulations, mademoiselle," said the Regent. "And pray who is the fortunate individual?"

“This gentleman, monseigneur, replied Law, presenting Cossard, “a director of the *Compagnie des Indes*, and,” he added, in a lower voice, “a millionaire.”

“Ah! I understand,” returned the Regent. “You are much to be envied, M. Cossard,” he continued. “You will have the fairest wife in all Paris.”

“Ah! monseigneur, you overwhelm me,” returned Cossard, enchanted, and bowing to the ground.

“But you must not shut her up,” pursued the Regent. “You must bring her to the *Palais Royal*—she will be the brightest ornament of the court. I say it in all sincerity, for there is no one to compare to her. You are reputed to be very rich, M. Cossard. You ought to buy lands which will give you a title, and so add to your lovely wife’s éclat.”

“I am already in treaty for a *château* and

barony in Normandy, monseigneur," replied Cos-sard.

"You cannot do better. Permit me a word with your fiancée."

At this intimation all the company retired, leaving Colombe standing near the Regent.

"I hope soon to see you at the Palais Royal," he said, taking her hand, and regarding her steadfastly. "I need not tell you that you are still mistress of my heart."

"Do not treat me thus, monseigneur, I beseech you," she rejoined. "I cannot listen to such language even from you, and, if you persist in it, I must withdraw."

"No, you must hear what I have to say to you," he rejoined, detaining her. "You are more beautiful than ever, Colombe. You must—you shall be mine."

"Cease!—cease, I implore you, monseigneur," she cried.

“Not till you promise compliance,” he rejoined.

“I can promise nothing, save that I will never willingly appear at the Palais Royal,” cried Colombe. “In the name of one who once succoured me at a moment like this, and who I feel would succour me now, if she could—in the name of the daughter you have lost, monseigneur, I beseech you to desist.”

“No more!—say no more,” cried the Regent, releasing her and putting his hand to his breast, as if to control a sudden pang. “You have cut me to the heart by that cruel allusion.”

“Forgive me, monseigneur. I do not desire to wound your feelings, nor to revive your grief, but I make this appeal, knowing you cannot resist it.”

“You are right, mademoiselle—I cannot,” he said, in a tone of deep emotion. “The Duchesse de Berri loved you, and would have guarded you—nay, she guards you still.”

“Oh! thanks, monseigneur!—In her name, thanks!”

“Let me ask you a question, which she would have asked you, mademoiselle,” said the Regent, after a moment’s pause, in a more serious tone than he had hitherto adopted. “And answer me as you would have answered her. Why are you about to make this mercenary match? Why do you throw away your charms on an imbecile like this Cossard? You deserve a better fate.”

“M. Cossard is my father’s choice, not mine, monseigneur,” she replied.

“But you have consented to marry him?”

“True, monseigneur, but I have never ceased to regret that I did so.”

“Your words would seem to imply that you love another. Nay, do not attempt disguise. I can read your secret in your looks. You love that young Englishman, M. Harcourt. Perhaps in a moment of jealousy you have given this rash promise to Cossard?”

"Your highness has divined the truth," she replied.

"Allons, courage!" he exclaimed. "It is not too late to remedy the error. I dare say M. Law can get you out of the difficulty."

"I am sure he can, monseigneur," she replied. "A word to him from your highness will suffice."

"Then it shall not be left unsaid," he replied, graciously.

Warmly expressing her gratitude, Colombe then retired, and, as she withdrew, the Regent mentally ejaculated, "Morbleu! it is a pity to lose so charming a creature, but the appeal she made was irresistible. I must save her from that abominable roturier, though it will cost me an effort to give her to her lover. However, she has my promise." Then motioning Evelyn to approach, he addressed him very affably, remarking that he had not seen him of late at the Palais Royal. "I suppose you have not escaped the prevailing fever, M. Harcourt," he added, "but are deeply engaged in the

game of speculation at which all are now playing? If you are lucky, you may become a millionaire, like M. Cossard,"

"There is but little chance of that, I fear, monseigneur," replied Evelyn. "However, I shall try."

"Let me hear how you get on," said the Regent. "And if you want advice," he added, in a significant tone, "do not hesitate to apply to M. Law. I will speak to him in your behalf."

Evelyn bowed gratefully, and retired.

After a brief conversation with Lady Catherine Law, the Regent terminated his visit, and was ceremoniously conducted to his carriage by Law. Just before entering the vehicle, he remarked to Law, "If you have an opportunity of serving your young countryman, M. Harcourt, I beg you not to neglect it."

"I should be happy to serve him on his own account, monseigneur, for I like him," replied Law. "But, recommended by your highness, he

has a double claim on my attention. Be assured I won't forget him."

"Let me make myself clear," said the Regent; "I want him to marry Colombe Laborde."

"But your highness is aware she is promised to M. Cossard. Her father's word is pledged to that gentleman. The match cannot be broken off."

"But Colombe detests the husband her father has chosen for her. She told me so herself just now."

"Ma foi, monseigneur! he is a very good man, M. Cossard, and will make her a capital husband. Your highness must excuse me. I cannot possibly interfere."

"Very well, then I must take the matter in hand myself," said the Regent.

And he stepped into his carriage.

End of the Fourth Book.

BOOK V.



LA RUE QUINCAMPOIX.



I.

THE YOUNG KING AND HIS GOVERNOR.

ONE day, at the period we have now reached, when Mr. Law's marvellous system had attained its apogee, a plan of Paris was exhibited by the Maréchal de Villeroy to the youthful Louis XV.

"What does your majesty think of it?" inquired Villeroy, seeing the young king examine it attentively.

"I am looking for the Rue Quincampoix, but cannot find it," replied Louis.

"Here it is, sire," replied the old marshal, pointing with his finger towards the centre of the map;

“this narrow defile, running between the Rue Saint Denis and the Rue Saint Martin, and extending, as your majesty will observe, from the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher to the Rue-aux-Ours.”

“Is it possible this can be meant for the famous Rue Quincampoix?” cried the youthful monarch. “The street should be twice as large, and it ought to have been gilded.”

“A very shrewd observation, sire,” replied the old courtier, bowing and smiling. “Unquestionably the Rue Quincampoix ought to be double its size to accommodate the crowds that daily resort to it, and gilding would be highly appropriate. Yet the designer of the plan is not to blame. The street is drawn by measurement. It is a narrow labyrinth, four hundred and fifty feet long, and contains under a hundred habitations, some of them ancient, but none of any pretension.”

“Mon Dieu! you surprise me, M. le Maréchal,” exclaimed Louis. “I thought it must be the finest street in Paris.”

“It is certainly the most crowded place in your great city, sire,” returned Villeroy. “More money changes hands in the Rue Quincampoix in the course of a day than in all the rest of Paris during a week. But in itself the street has little to recommend it to notice. It is inhabited almost entirely by Jews, brokers, scriveners, usurers, money-changers, and persons of that class. Many of these have now parcelled out their habitations, and let each room, from garret to cellar, at an exorbitant rent—more than used to be paid for the whole house. In all these rooms counters are established at which business is done, and some of the bankers, at a loss for accommodation, have built guérites on the roofs. But I crave your majesty’s pardon. You must find these details wearisome.”

“On the contrary, M. le Maréchal,” replied the young king, “they interest me exceedingly. It is only lately that I have heard so much about the Rue Quincampoix.”

“Because it is only within the last few months, and since M. Law’s extraordinary financial operations have driven all Paris mad, that the street has become so famous, or rather, I ought to say, so notorious. But it has always been well known, because inhabited by money-lenders. The word Quincampoix, I may remark, if your majesty will excuse my pedantry, is derived from the Latin, *quinque pagi* (five territories), and two or three villages in the neighbourhood of Paris are so called. An hotel built by the lord of one of these villages gave its name to the street. In the latter days of your majesty’s great grandsire, and my sovereign and master, Louis XIV., the billets d’état were somewhat discredited, and their holders used to flock to the Rue Quincampoix to dispose of them. At that time the street occasionally presented a very animated appearance, but nothing to what it does now. I happened to be there when the first issue of shares by the *Compagnie des*

Indes took place, and I can assure your majesty it was a wonderful sight. I was forced hither and thither, against my will, by the living stream, bewildered and deafened by the cries. All distinction of rank was gone. Nobles, ladies of title, lacqueys, priests, cut-purses, cheats of all kinds, were mixed up *pêle-mêle*. With some difficulty, and not without the loss of my purse and portefeuille, I extricated myself from the throng, and sought refuge in M. Tourton's bank, where I was detained for more than an hour. At either end of the street there are iron grilles, which are shut by order of M. de Machault, lieutenant-general of police, from nine at night to six in the morning. As soon as the clock strikes nine drums are beaten by the guard stationed at these gates, and the crowd is driven out by a patrol. Without this precaution, the place would never be at rest. On the occasion to which I have just referred, all the adjacent streets were filled with carriages."

“I should like to see the street when thus crowded,” said the young king. “I have promised M. Law to go there some day.”

“Apparently, M. Law is in great favour with your majesty?”

“Yes, I like him very much. I am always sorry when he quits my presence, and that is more than I can say for every one who approaches me.”

“M. Law is an agreeable man, sire, and a very skilful financier, but I fear he will do infinite mischief to the community.”

“Your opinion of him is very different from that of the Regent, who tells me M. Law has saved the country from bankruptcy and ruin. Our coffers were empty, and M. Law has replenished them—so the Regent says. Trade was dead, and M. Law has reanimated it. Money was scarce, and it is now plentiful. Many of my subjects, who were plunged in misery and want, are now happy and prosperous. These benefits have been conferred

upon the nation, my uncle says, by M. Law. If so, I ought to feel exceedingly grateful to him."

"This confounded adventurer has obtained greater influence over his majesty than I could have supposed," thought Villeroy. "It must be my business to undo it.—It is to be hoped that this prosperous state of things may last, sire," he added aloud.

"What do you apprehend?" cried the young king, quickly.

"I fear the brilliant bubble blown by M. Law may burst, sire."

"You are unjust to M. Law. You don't know what he can do. My uncle tells me he has undertaken to pay off the state debt of fifteen millions."

"Oh! he will promise anything, sire. But can he perform his promise?"

"Yes, I believe he will. And if he does, I shall make him comptroller-general, on my uncle's recommendation."

"Even if M. Law were eligible to the post, sire,

which he is not, owing to his religion, he would make a very indifferent minister of finance," observed Villeroy; "and your majesty would do wrong so to appoint him."

"It is plain you are M. Law's enemy, M. le Maréchal," remarked Louis.

"Not his enemy, sire, but I confess that I distrust him," responded Villeroy. "And I feel bound in duty to caution your majesty against him."

"My confidence in M. Law is not to be shaken," replied the young monarch. "But I have something to tell you. The Regent wishes me to give a ball at the Tuileries to the young nobility."

"A charming idea!" exclaimed Villeroy. "Your majesty will have an opportunity of seeing the future members of your court. I shall be delighted to arrange the fête. I will draw up a programme, and submit a list of those whom it may be proper to honour with an invitation. None

but scions of the nobility can be your majesty's guests."

"Two exceptions must be made—Mademoiselle Law and her brother."

"I am astounded, sire. I understood this was to be a ball given to the young nobility."

"You understood aright, M. le Maréchal."

"Then permit me to observe, sire, that Mademoiselle Law and her brother are inadmissible."

"Permit me, in my turn, to observe, M. le Maréchal, that I have already invited them."

"How! invited them? I fear the step will give great offence to your proud noblesse, sire, and it will surprise me if Mademoiselle Law and her brother pass a very pleasant evening."

"Any affront to them will be an affront to me, and I shall resent it, and so I am sure will my uncle the Regent," returned the young king, with dignity.

"I hope nothing of the kind may occur, sire,

and I will do my best to prevent it; but I cannot control others."

"I will take care of my guests," said Louis, with spirit. "If no one else will dance with Mademoiselle Law, I will dance with her the whole evening, and the Regent, I am sure, will find partners for her brother."

"Opposition will only irritate him, so I must concede," thought Villeroy. "But the ball shall not take place—on that I am determined. Your majesty's wishes are law to me," he added aloud. "When is the ball to take place?"

"I shall fix the day with the Regent," replied Louis. "He will be here presently with M. Law."

"Again M. Law!" mentally ejaculated Villeroy. "Perdition take him!"

"At the same time," pursued the young king, "I shall ask my uncle to take me to the Rue Quincampoix. M. Law will attend us."

"As your governor, sire, it will be my duty to

attend you," remarked Villeroy. "I cannot be left out."

"I have no wish to leave you out," said Louis; "but I must have M. Law."

"But, sire, his attendance will be quite superfluous. I can explain everything to you."

"I don't doubt it," replied Louis. "But M. Law, and no one else, shall be my cicerone."

II.

THE MISSISSIPPIANS.

AT this epoch there was no Exchange in Paris, as at London and Amsterdam, to which merchants, dealers, bankers, and foreigners could resort, though Law intended to build one, and with that view had purchased six large houses in the Rue Vivienne, lying between the garden of the Hôtel Mazarin and the Rue Colbert. These habitations were to have been pulled down and a splendid structure erected on their site, which should comprise the Exchange and the Post-office, then si-

tuated in the Rue Bourdonnais, but, unluckily, the design was frustrated.

As there was no Exchange, there were no regular stockbrokers, and this business was transacted by the bankers, money-dealers, discounters and scribes, established in the Rue Quincampoix. Here it was, a few years previously, that the discredited billets d'état had been bought and sold, and a great deal of business was done in this way; but it was on the establishment of the Compagnie d'Occident, and the issue of its shares, that the street first began to assume the character of an Exchange. When the Anti-System commenced the speculators were doubled in number, and the spirit of gambling, which afterwards burnt with such unparalleled fury, was fairly kindled. At this time the jobbers divided themselves into two parties—one supporting Law, and the other the frères Paris.

For a brief period, owing to the dexterous management of its directors, the Anti-System had the

advantage, and it was the opinion of many shrewd speculators that Law would be defeated, but they knew not with whom they had to deal. The aspect of affairs was totally changed, when, the Orient being incorporated with the Occident, Law was enabled to give to his company the proud designation of *Compagnie des Indes*. It was then that the wonderful resources of his genius became manifest, and his opponents found, to their dismay, that they could no longer compete with him.

The issue of the fifty thousand new shares, which were designated *les Filles*, produced an extraordinary effect. The subscription was at once filled up, and such was the ardour of the Mississippians, as the jobbers in the Rue Quincampoix were styled, to purchase them, that they speedily rose to two hundred per cent., throwing the shares of the *Fermes Générales* completely into the shade.

Determined to crush his rivals, Law next joined to the enormous privileges already enjoyed by the *Compagnie des Indes* the administration of the

Mint, which he purchased from the government for nine years, at the price of fifty millions. This important acquisition, which materially tended to consolidate his power, enabled him to issue fifty thousand more actions at five hundred livres each.

The issue of these shares, which were designated *les Petites Filles*, created a perfect fureur among the Mississippians, and it was at this juncture that the vast crowds we have described began to assemble daily in the Rue Quincampoix. Driven almost to despair, the supporters of the Anti-System sought to strike a heavy blow against Law by presenting for payment a vast number of billets de banque, which they had collected for the purpose. But Law, warned of their design, issued a decree reducing the value of specie from that day, so that the mischievous schemers, among whom were D'Argenson and the Prince de Conti, were checkmated.

Justly indignant, Law took speedy and severe vengeance upon his adversaries. He proposed to

the Regent to take on lease the whole of the Fermes Générales, and to lend the government twelve hundred millions at three per cent., to be employed in paying off the state-creditors. This offer was accepted, and D'Argenson, who was not even consulted in the affair, was compelled, to his infinite rage and mortification, to annul the contract he had entered into with the frères Paris, and so give with his own hand the coup-de-grace to the Anti-System.

Thus Law's triumph was complete. By a subsequent arrangement, the loan to the state was raised to fifteen hundred millions.

This financial revolution was accomplished in a wonderfully short space of time by a series of ordinances, so contrived by Law as to throw the Mississippians in a perfect state of frenzy. The operation was conducted in this manner. Warrants were delivered by the government to its creditors, made payable by the Compagnie des Indes. On his part, Law commenced by issuing a hun-

dred thousand new shares of the nominal value of five hundred livres each, but reserving to himself a premium equal to that obtained by the old shares; which, being a thousand per cent., raised them to five thousand livres. These shares, which were called *les Cinq Cents*, were purchasable in ten payments of five hundred livres each. The empressement of the public to procure the *Cinq Cents* was prodigious. Never had been anything like it. Every one was seized as with a vertigo. There were no conditions, as in the case of the *Filles* and *Petites Filles*. A share, which would ensure a fortune, could be obtained on payment of five hundred livres to a cashier of the Compagnie. The public avidity seemed insatiable. On the announcement of the subscription, the Rue Vivienne was filled by a maddened and tumultuous crowd, struggling towards the gates of the Hôtel Mazarin, which were guarded by a detachment of archers. Not only were the bureaux of the cashiers continually besieged, but the ante-chambers, the

staircases, and the courts of the hotel. "During several days and several nights," says Lemontey, "a phalanx advanced towards the bureau of exchange, like a compact column, which neither sleep, nor hunger, nor thirst could disperse. But, on the fatal cry announcing the delivery of the last subscription, all disappeared."

The Hôtel Law was beset in like manner, and heavy bribes and the most extraordinary stratagems, to which we shall have occasion to refer presently, were resorted to to obtain access to him. In like manner, the porters of the company received large douceurs to enter the names of subscribers, while some persons, disguised in Law's livery, succeeded in obtaining prompt admittance to the bureaux. As the price of shares rose from hour to hour, so did the fury of the crowd to possess the magic papers increase. Amid this frenzied excitement, the only tranquil persons were the bankers and brokers in the Rue Quincampoix, and they were easy because they knew that shares

would be brought them, which had been indirectly secured by the various employés of the company, and which could only be disposed of by their agency.

An admirable picture of the Rue Quincampoix at this period has been given by Duhautchamp, an eye-witness of the scenes he has so well described. "This famous street," he says, "which for time out of mind had been the rendezvous of dealers in paper, was chosen as a place wherein to hold their meetings by those who laboured at the birth of the System, and the bankers, since become excessively opulent, began to deal in the shares of the *Compagnie d'Occident*, and those of the *Anti-System*. In this place also were seen flying about the state securities, although proscribed because they had not been submitted to the *Visa*. Here also were negotiated the *billets d'état*, which, notwithstanding the reduction they had already undergone at the hands of the tribunal, lost half. Formerly these transactions took

place in the houses and bureaux, but as soon as the operations of the System began in earnest, all the Mississippians assembled publicly and bare-headed in the street. Law's first steps having excited opposite opinions, they began by talking over the news, incidentally referring to matters of business in imitation of the merchants who daily frequent the Exchanges of London and Amsterdam. In proportion as the shares of the Compagnie d'Occident rose in favour these assemblies increased, and the amalgamation of the company with that of the Indies still further augmented the numbers, but when the Anti-System was despoiled of the Fermes Générales, this event, combined with other surprising circumstances that rapidly followed, brought to the place all those who had funds as well as those who had not: the former to buy and sell ten and twenty times a day, and the latter to practise the business of a broker. Others, foreseeing that the ground of this street would mount to so high a price that ten feet square

would fetch the price of a seigneurial territory, seized upon all the houses to let as well as apartments, to sub-let them in detail to the stock-jobbers, who now rushed thither in a crowd to establish their bureaux. This foresight enriched those who turned it to profit. The bureaux were let for two, three, and even four hundred livres a month, according to size; whence it will be judged what must have been the profits of a house containing thirty or forty bureaux. All the houses in the Rue Quincampoix and in the adjoining streets were divided into bureaux, not excepting even the garrets and cellars. A cobbler, who worked under four planks set against the garden-wall of the famous banker, Tourton, transformed his humble shed into a bureau, furnishing it with seats for the accommodation of ladies whom curiosity drew to the spot; and finding his idea succeed he abandoned his old business, and provided pens and paper for those who conducted their business in his shop, by which means he

gained two hundred livres a day. The successive movements of the System, joined to the feverish agitation of the public, rendered the famous Rue Quincampoix more flourishing than ever. The highest and most notable persons in the kingdom might there be seen familiarly mingling with the vilest dealers. Nobles did not hesitate to exchange their fairest lands for paper; others melted down their funds; and ladies brought the produce of their jewels. This strange frenzy irritating the cupidity of the great dealers, caused the shares to rise with astonishing rapidity. The manner of doing business resembled the flux and ebb of the sea. The striking of a clock in the bureau of a skilful dealer named Papillon caused the shares to rise, because the emissaries and clerks of this personage went amongst the crowd and to the different bureaux, asking for shares at any price. The public, always ready to follow the stream, did the same, alarming those who had previously sold, and who, rejoining the throng, hastened to buy again,

while the agents of the manœuvre, having accomplished their object, slipped away. Two hours later, at the sound of a whistle from the bureau of Fleury, an accomplice in the manœuvre, other emissaries went about in all directions like the first, offering to sell at any price, until the shares fell as quickly as they had risen. This was the ebb. Both movements were accompanied by a tumultuous roar among the crowd, that resembled the noise of waves agitated by the wind."

The concourse in the Rue Quincampoix was not entirely composed of Parisians. Every province of France was there largely represented, though it was remarked that the Gascons predominated, and, owing to their excitable temperament, were the noisiest and most eager speculators. So great was the affluence of strangers to Paris at this time that the hotels were filled to overflowing, and hundreds were daily arriving from all parts of the country. All the public carriages coming from Marseilles, Lyons, Aix, Bordeaux, Strasbourg,

and Brussels were retained for a couple of months, and the tickets for the seats disposed of at double or treble price. When the System was at its height, it is estimated that there were five hundred thousand strangers in Paris, and most of these found their way at one time or other to the Rue Quincampoix. The bureaux were kept by Germans, Swiss, Italians, Dutchmen, Englishmen, Flemings, or by persons from Languedoc, Provence, Dauphiny, Normandy, and Lorraine—scarcely one belonged to a Parisian. As the crowd was composed of people of all countries, all languages were spoken—Dutch, German, English, Spanish, and Italian—so that the place was a perfect Babel.

Many changes have been made in the Rue Quincampoix since the period of our story, but it still retains something of its former picturesque aspect. In several of the older houses may be noted balconies of iron, very curiously and elaborately wrought, stone sculptures, and ponderous

oaken doors, studded with broad-headed nails, and clamped with iron. All these existed in Law's time. Close to the Rue-aux-Ours there is a singular old house, standing en vedette in the street. This was the residence of M. Tourton, the banker. In the reign of Louis Philippe the Rue Quincampoix was cut in twain by the Rue Rambuteau. During the construction of the broad and magnificent Boulevard de Sébastopol, by M. Haussmann, many of the dark and tortuous labyrinths in this quarter were swept away; but the Rue Quincampoix was spared. It is still the centre of considerable traffic; but instead of the bankers, the stockbrokers, and scriveners of days gone by, its present occupants are curriers, confectioners, druggists, dealers in wine, and vendors of caoutchouc.

III.

LAW'S VAST POSSESSIONS.

LAW was now the popular idol. By the vulgar he was revered as a supernatural being. Addresses and petitions were showered upon him. Honours of all kinds were paid him. His name was coupled with that of the youthful sovereign, and when the Academy of Sciences elected him as a member, he was saluted on his entrance by shouts of "Vivent le Roi et Monseigneur Law!"

All that was distinguished in Paris flocked to pay him court, and his ante-chambers were more

crowded than those of the Palais Royal. Adulation the most extraordinary was paid to Lady Catherine Law, and if she had been a queen she could scarcely have received greater homage than was now constantly paid her by ladies of the highest rank. Duchesses and marchionesses, on approaching her, made a profound reverence, and kissed her hand. Marks of attention equally flattering, and from the same exalted personages, were shown to little Kate Law, and, although she was not of an age to marry, several highly important offers were made her. At a magnificent ball given for her by her father, and which was attended by the élite of the nobility, the first to arrive was the Nuncio, who saluted her as the queen of the fête, and kissed her on the forehead.

The manner in which Law was beset amounted to persecution. Ladies of the highest quality passed days and nights in his ante-chambers awaiting the opening of his doors. His major-domo, Thierry, frequently received a thousand crowns to

convey a letter to his master, and double the amount if he could procure an interview for the writer.

Mr. Law still continued to occupy his hotel in the Place Vendôme, but he had greatly embellished it, and now possessed a superb collection of pictures and a noble gallery of sculpture. His entertainments were frequent, and of regal splendour.

A portion of his enormous capital had been invested in the purchase of vast seigneurial properties, fourteen of which he had already acquired. The duchy of Mercœur was ceded to him by the Princess Dowager of Condé for 870,000 livres, and a bonus of 100,000. For the marquisate of Effiat he gave 2,300,000. For the earldom of Tancarville and the barony of Hallebosc he gave 650,000 livres in specie, and 7410 in contingent annuities. Besides these he bought the princely domains of Guermante en Brie; Roissy (which

cost him a million); Saint Germain (which cost another million), Domfront, La Marche, and Ligny. Understanding that M. de Novion, President à Mortier, had a fine estate to sell, Law paid him a visit, and said,

“I am told that you ask four hundred thousand livres for your estate. Permit me to say that is scarcely a fair price. I offer you four hundred and fifty thousand.”

“I am charmed with your mode of doing business, M. Law,” rejoined De Novion. “But I cannot take advantage of your liberality. The estate is yours at the sum I originally named, but I must annex one condition to the bargain—a mere trifle, however, which cannot possibly affect our arrangement. Instead of billets de banque, you shall pay me in louis d’or.”

Law immediately perceived his drift, but affecting the most perfect indifference, replied,

“You give me an agreeable surprise, M. le Pré-

sident. Nothing is more easy of fulfilment than your condition. You shall have the purchase-money in gold as you require."

In Paris, besides his private hotel in the Place Vendôme, the Hôtel Mazarin and the six adjacent houses in the Rue Vivienne, Law had bought the hotel of the Comte de Tessé for 150,000 livres; the Hôtel de Soissons from the Prince de Carignan for 1,400,000 livres; the Hôtel de Rambouillet; and a vast plot of ground near the Porte Montmartre, on which he intended to erect the Mint.

Among the many important personages who had profited by the system, the chief gainer was the Duc de Bourbon, who, favoured in every way by Law, had made twenty millions by the great coup-de-main which occurred on the reimbursement of the rents. It was estimated that the duke's total profits exceeded sixty millions. These enormous gains enabled him to pay off all his liabilities, and to rebuild Chantilly, and he gave a grand fête to the Regent which lasted five days and nights,

and cost five millions. The duke was one day boasting of the number of his actions to M. Turmenies, when the latter reproved him, by saying, "Fi, monseigneur. One of your great-grandsire's actions was worth all yours."

What Dubois gained can only be surmised, but he took what he pleased. The Duc d'Antin gained twelve millions, and the Prince de Conti became hostile to Law because he was only allowed four millions. The Regent's favourites of both sexes received immense sums, and Nocé, the Canillac, and Brancas were each gratified with fifty thousand livres.

Having a richer mine than any in Potosi or Peru ever open to him, the Regent, whose prodigality was boundless, applied to it without scruple. Law answered all his demands, and as there was always a partisan to gain, a mistress to pension, or a favourite to enrich, these applications were incessant. In some instances the Regent's munificence was well applied. He bestowed a million

upon the Hôtel Dieu, another on the Hospice Général, and a third on the Enfants-Trouvés. Moreover, fifteen hundred thousand livres were employed by him in the liberation of prisoners for debt.

IV.

A COUPLE OF OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

ONE morning, when Law was alone in his cabinet, occupied with a vast pile of letters and papers which had been left for his inspection, his major-domo entered, and said two gentlemen were without who were particularly anxious to have an interview with him.

“Why do you interrupt me thus, Thierry?” cried Law, angrily. “You know I won’t see any one. I am busy. I am engaged. Tell the gentlemen so. They must wait till the doors of the

ante-chamber are opened if they desire to see me. I will grant no private interview."

"Possibly monseigneur may feel inclined to make an exception in favour of these two gentlemen, when I mention that they are his compatriots, and had the honour of his acquaintance some years ago in London. They are Sir Terence O'Flaherty and Sir Patrick Molloy," said Thierry, referring to the cards which he carried on a salver. "Perhaps monseigneur may recollect them. They are rather droll in manner, but the English—begging monseigneur's pardon—are somewhat odd and eccentric."

"Judging from their names, they must be Irishmen, not Englishmen," observed Law. "I don't remember to have heard of them before. However, admit them."

Thierry bowed and departed, and shortly afterwards ushered in two extraordinary individuals, whose deportment was so ridiculously grotesque, that the habitual gravity of the stately major-

domo was greatly disturbed, and he had to beat a precipitate retreat in order to avoid laughing outright.

Both personages were as grand as embroidered velvet coats of the latest mode, powdered perukes, laced ruffles and cravats, diamond-hilted swords, diamond buckles and red-heeled shoes could make them, but their uncouth manner and absurd grimaces showed they were wholly unaccustomed to such finery.

Law eyed them with astonishment, and at first with displeasure; but suddenly a light seemed to break upon him, and his countenance relaxed into a smile.

“Unless my memory deceives me, we have met before, Sir Terence,” he said, addressing the foremost of the two, who still continued bowing and scraping, “but under rather different circumstances.”

“Yer lordship is right,” replied Sir Terence. “The circumstances was rayther different. Then

my friend Pat—Sir Patrick, I mane—and myself was two poor cheermen, glad to air a crown, and now, thanks to yer lordship, we've plenty of bank-notes in our pockets, and are able to ride in a gilt coach, with futmen at the back ov it, as proud as the Lord Mayor ov Lunnun."

"By the powers! it was a lucky day for me and Sir Terence when we tuk yer hon'r to White's Coffee-house," added the other. "You towld us then you could teach us how to make a hundred guineas out ov one, and we were fools enough not to believe you, but now the words has come true. A few guineas has made both our fortins."

"I am rejoiced to hear of your success," replied Law. "But pray sit down, and tell me all about it."

"I thank your lordship," replied Sir Terence, "but Sir Patrick and myself couldn't think of sitting down in your presence. Your lordship *must* know, then, that all Lunnun has been ringin' for the last six months wi' your wonderful doings, and

in coorse we couldn't help hearin' ov 'em, so says I to my mate, 'Pat,' says I, 'may I nivr taste usquebaugh agin if the great Mister Laa they talk so much about ain't the jontleman as we used to carry. I tell you wot it is, Pat,' says I, 'I mane to go to Paris myself and see his hon'r, and maybe he'll teach me how to make my fortin.' 'I'll go with you,' says he. This was aisier said than done, and we might have tarried in Lunnun to this blessed day, but luckily some persons ov quality brought us wid them to Paris. Well, to make a long story short, on our arrival Pat and I puts our funds together, and we finds we have jist ten guineas, and wid this sum we goes to Mister Hopkinson, the English broker in the Rue Quinquagesimy, and we buys a share of him, and so makes a start. Before an hour we had sold that share for a hundred times what we guv for it, so thinkin' ourselves in a run ov luck, we goes on buyin' and sellin' all day long, and all next day, and all the day after that, for a week. And at

the end ov that time we finds ourselves masters ov a mint ov money. All this we owes to yer lordship."

"Not so, my good friends; you owe it to your own cleverness."

"Divil a bit could we have made two hundred thousand livres, if yer lordship hadn't set up this wonderful System—a lottery in which there's all prizes and no blanks. Well, having got rich, we have set up as jontlemen, have bought the finest clothes and the handsomest periwigs to be had for money, have taken grand rooms in an hotel in the Rue Saint Honoré, close by, have bought a grand gilt coach, and hired a coachman and a couple of futmen, and, in order to get on in society, have put a handle to our names. My friend is Sir Patrick, and I am Sir Terence, at yer lordship's sarvice."

"By the powers! we're so transmogrified by these Mounseers, that our own mothers wouldn't know their sons," cried Sir Patrick. "I am going

to take a few lessons in dancin' and fencin', and then my edication will be complait."

"Well, my good friends, I am very glad to see you," observed Law, "and I must congratulate you once more on your good luck. But the best advice I can give you is to return to London as quickly as you can."

"Lunnon won't do after Paris," remarked Sir Terence. "We know when we're well off. We go daily to the Rue Quinquagesimy, and pick up a few thousand livres, and mighty pleasant pastime it is."

"Take care some of the brokers there are not too sharp for you in the end," said Law. "Fortunes are just as quickly lost as made. And I again strongly recommend you to be content with what you have gained, and to take care of it."

"Sich advice sounds strange from yer lordship, who has turned all the world crazy wi' speculation," observed Sir Terence. "But we can't follow it."

"Well, if you get into any difficulties, apply to

me," said Law. "And be upon your guard, for Paris at this moment swarms with sharpers and adventurers. And now, my friends," he added, touching a bell, "you must excuse me for terminating the interview, but I have many important matters to attend to. I am very glad to have seen you, and shall be happy to see you again."

"We won't fail to present ourselves on some other occasion," said Sir Terence, "and we thank yer lordship for the great kindness and condescension you have shown us."

At this moment the major-domo appeared, and, with many grotesque congees, the two knights of Saint Patrick withdrew.

V.

HOW MR. LAW ENGAGED A NEW COACHMAN.

LAW then addressed himself once more to his papers; but he was not allowed to remain long undisturbed. Thierry again appeared, and said:

“Hippolyte, the coachman, begs permission to speak with monseigneur.”

“Peste take him!” cried Law. “What does he want with me? Send him to my steward, M^r le Blanc.”

“Perhaps monseigneur will be good enough to hear him. Apparently, he has a favour to ask.”

“Yes, a great favour, monseigneur,” said the coachman, who had followed Thierry into the room.

“Ah! you are there, Hippolyte,” cried Law. “Approach, mon ami, and tell me what you desire. But how comes it that I find you in plain clothes? What have you done with your livery?”

“I am come to ask monseigneur to do me the great favour to discharge me,” replied Hippolyte.

“Discharge you! No, no, mon ami—anything but that. I am perfectly content with you, and so is Lady Catherine, and you are an especial favourite with Mademoiselle Law and my son.”

“I have always endeavoured to give you satisfaction, monseigneur, and I am proud that my humble services have been appreciated.”

“Then what do you complain of?” cried Law.

“I don’t complain of anything, monseigneur—far from it,” said Hippolyte. “I couldn’t have a

better or more generous master. I would rather serve monseigneur than the Regent himself."

"In that case, why do you desire to leave me? Without compliment, you are the best coachman in Paris. I cannot part with you. If you want higher wages, speak! We shan't fall out on that score."

"Monseigneur, I repeat I am extremely concerned to leave you. But I must go. The fact is, monseigneur, I have borrowed a leaf from your book. I have been extremely lucky in my speculations in the Rue Quincampoix, and am rich enough to keep my own carriage."

"Diable! then there is no more to be said. But if you leave me thus at a moment's notice, what the deuce am I to do for a coachman?"

"Monseigneur, I would stay, rather than you should be in the slightest degree inconvenienced," replied Hippolyte; "but I have taken care to provide a successor to the siége I have vacated. Will it please you to see him?"

And as Law nodded, he went to the door, and introduced two well-grown men, both evidently of his own late vocation.

“Voilà! Auguste, monseigneur,” he said, indicating the foremost of them. “He has lived four years with the Duc de Bouillon. This young man is André, monseigneur,” pointing to the other. “He has lived with the Prince de Soubise. I can confidently recommend them both.”

“I am obliged to you for your consideration, M. Hippolyte,” said Law; “but you have gone beyond the mark. I don’t require two coachmen.”

“Oh! that is quite understood, monseigneur,” returned Hippolyte. “Select whichever you prefer. I will take the other.”

“Well, then, my choice falls upon André,” said Law.

“I shall be proud to serve you, monseigneur,” said the fortunate individual, bowing, “and I don’t think you will regret the choice you have made.”

“Your wages will be the same as those of M. Hippolyte,” said Law. “But you must enter upon your duties at once.”

“I will explain all to him, monseigneur,” replied the *ci-devant* coachman.

And, bowing respectfully, he retired with the two candidates for the box.

VI.

MORE OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

ENTRANCE could not be obtained to the vestibule of the Hôtel Law without a considerable fee to the tall Swiss porters stationed there. Another heavy fee was required by the lacqueys stationed at the doors of the ante-chamber; and a third and yet larger fee would alone induce the major-domo, Thierry, to convey a message to his master.

When the doors of the ante-chamber were at last opened, the scene was most extraordinary. The crowd, consisting almost entirely of persons of the highest rank, princes, dukes, peers, mar-

shals, generals, prelates, duchesses, peeresses, and other ladies, distinguished for beauty as for birth who had been waiting for hours, all flocked in to pay their court to Law, and solicit shares and subscriptions from him. Sometimes the ladies completely surrounded him, and would not let him go till they had obtained compliance with their requests.

Audiences like these, which, as we have said, outshone those of the Palais Royal in number and importance of the company, might be gratifying to Law's vanity, but they soon became wearisome and almost intolerable, and had it not been to please Lady Catherine, he would have put an end to them.

On the morning when the two Irishmen, by dint of a heavy bribe to Thierry, managed to gain access to Law, there was a great crowd, almost entirely composed of ladies of rank, in the antechamber. Many of them had come at an early hour, and their patience had been severely tried.

At last the doors were thrown open by Thierry and the other valets, and Law, with Lady Catherine, their youthful son, Mademoiselle Law, and Colombe, were discovered in the inner salon.

A general rush towards Law was made by the ladies, but he checked their advance by exclaiming, "You are too late, mesdames—you are too late. The subscription-list is closed. Not a single share is left."

At this announcement murmurs of disappointment arose from them all, but they were presently consoled by Law, who told them that a new issue of shares would be made in a week, and that all their names should be placed on the list.

"You have only to inscribe them in the visitors' book before you leave, and they shall be transferred to the register," he said.

Satisfied by this assurance, they hastened to make their reverences to Lady Catherine Law, bending before her, and kissing her hand as if she were a queen, complimenting Mademoiselle

Law and Colombe, and bestowing marks of admiration on the great financier's son, then a pretty boy of twelve. This done, they hurried away to inscribe their names as directed—a process which could not be accomplished without another fee.

So anxious were these titled dames to be first on the list, that the room was quickly cleared, and at length only one lady was left.

Though she could no longer be called young, being about the same age as Lady Catherine herself, this lady was still very handsome, and of distinguished appearance and manner. Her attire was of the latest Parisian mode, and of extreme richness, but it was easy to see she was an Englishwoman. With her were two gentlemen, well dressed and of polished manners, but unmistakably from the same country as herself.

“Voilà! une belle dame Anglaise, maman,” whispered Catherine Law, as the lady approached.

Up to this moment, Lady Catherine had paid no attention whatever to the lady in question, but

she now regarded her, and the moment she did so, a sudden change came over her countenance.

On her part, the lady, who had been led on by one of the gentlemen, stood still, and after a moment's pause, during which Lady Catherine gazed at her as if she beheld a ghost, she said in low, familiar accents, which vibrated through her hearer's frame, "Don't you know me, Kate? Don't you recognise your own Belinda?"

With an irrepressible cry of surprise and delight, Lady Catherine, who was seated on a large fauteuil, sprang to her feet, and tenderly embraced her. Still she could scarcely believe that she held her long-lost friend in her arms, and once more keenly scrutinised her features.

"Yes, yes, I can no longer doubt," she cried. "I see it is my beloved Belinda, whom I have so long mourned as dead. Welcome back to life, my dearest friend!—welcome to your ever constant Kate, who has never ceased to think of you—never ceased to deplore your supposed tragical fate.

Ah! why, dearest Belinda, why have you allowed me to shed so many useless tears? But I am too happy now to reproach you. But where is my husband?"

"He is here," replied Law, who had been roused by Lady Catherine's cry of astonishment; "and he is as much amazed as yourself at this wonderful revival. But are you really alive, madam?" he added to Belinda. "You certainly look like flesh and blood, and yet you ought to be a spirit."

"You will find me much the same Belinda as of old," she replied; "but if you persist in thinking, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that I belong to the world of spirits, I must bring forward my husband to vouch for me that I am a living woman."

"I will vouch for it," said the personage appealed to, who was no other than the Hon. Charles Carrington, saluting Law and Lady Catherine.

“If you are a ghost, you are a very charming one.”

“I am lost in wonder!” exclaimed Law.

“However, my amazement must not prevent me from expressing the pleasure I feel at meeting my friends again. I am delighted to see you, Carington, and you, too, Sir Harry Archer,” he added, shaking hands heartily with them both.

“And now, Belinda,” said Lady Catherine to her friend, “you must gratify my curiosity, and let me know by what means you escaped the dreadful fate intended for you by your jealous monster of a husband. All the world thought you had perished by poison.”

“Luckily, the potion administered to me by Mr. Wilson was a powerful opiate, and not a poisonous mixture,” replied Belinda; “but I fear he intended to kill me. Such was the effect of the draught, that animation was suspended for more than two days, and all thought me lifeless, and even the coroner himself, and the surgeon

who accompanied him, came to the same conclusion. And now comes the strangest part of my strange story. The coroner's dreadful business over—fortunately, I was unconscious of it—orders were given for my immediate interment, and I was actually placed in my coffin.”

“I saw you laid in it, my love,” exclaimed Lady Catherine, with a thrill of horror, “and thought, while kissing your cold, pale brow, that I was bidding you an eternal adieu.”

“Friends do not often meet again on earth after such a parting,” said Belinda. “On that very night the soporific effect of the potion passed away, and the death-like lethargy, in which my senses had been so long wrapped, fled. I heaved a sigh, and slightly stirred, but both sigh and movement reached the ears of my faithful and sorrowing Martha, who watched by her mistress, and, though frightened at first, she soon ascertained that I was living, and released me. Had my restoration been delayed for a few hours longer, I

should have only escaped one frightful death to meet another yet more terrible. But I was saved."

"Go on—I can scarcely breathe," cried Lady Catherine.

"By Martha's attentions I was soon brought completely to myself, and made acquainted with all that occurred," pursued Belinda; "but the shock well-nigh bereft me of my senses again. Yet, even while I was in that state, a strange idea crossed me. I felt sick of the world, and, as it supposed me dead, no one but Martha should know that I was still living. I communicated my design to her. She endeavoured to dissuade me from it, but at last yielded to my entreaties, and at my request bore me to her own room, and placed me in her own bed. This done, she returned, and filled the coffin with some lumber—what, I know not, but it answered the purpose, and imposed upon the men, who next morn fastened the coffin down. The funeral ceremony

then took place; the coffin with its contents were entombed, and I had disappeared from the world."

"A strange story indeed!" exclaimed Lady Catherine. "But what happened next?"

"As soon as I could do so with safety, I withdrew into the country with Martha, and took a pretty cottage near Windsor, where I lived in perfect retirement for several years, happier than I had ever been since my marriage, and scarcely regretting the world I had quitted. If I could have seen you, Kate, I should have been perfectly content, but you had left England with your husband. I had taken all my jewels with me, and the sale of these useless ornaments supplied me with ample funds. I have said I was happy in my little cottage, and so I was; and I might have been there still, had not chance brought Charles Carrington into the neighbourhood. We met. An explanation ensued, and, after many entreaties, Charlie prevailed upon me to appear in the world

again. Six months ago we were married. Now you have the whole of my history."

"Let me add, Lady Catherine," said Carrington, "that my wife would never let me rest till I agreed to bring her to Paris to see you and Mr. Law. So here we are."

"And enchanted I am to see you," cried Lady Catherine. "But why didn't you write to me, Belinda?"

"Because I wished to give you an agreeable surprise. You know I'm a very odd person, Kate."

VII.

THE EARL OF ISLAY AND LORD BELHAVEN.

“AH! how little you are altered, Belinda!” Lady Catherine exclaimed, steadfastly regarding the features of her long-lost friend. “It is fifteen years since we met—quite a life—and yet you are just the same—just the same!”

“If you are changed at all, Kate, it is for the better,” replied Belinda, tenderly squeezing the other’s hand, and looking into her face, as she spoke. “I declare you are handsomer than ever.”

“Flatterer!” cried Lady Catherine. “But I

must introduce my children to you," she added, presenting them.

"I think I should have known them anywhere, from their likeness to Mr. Law," said Belinda, tenderly embracing them. "But who is this?" she added, glancing at Colombe. "Is it not Mademoiselle Laborde?"

"It is," replied Lady Catherine, very much surprised. "But how comes it that you have made such a good guess? Have you heard of Colombe before?"

"I have," replied Belinda, smiling. "Only a few days before we left London, my husband received a letter in which a great deal was said about her."

"You hear that, Colombe?" said Lady Catherine, turning to her. "Mrs. Carrington says that some one has written about you to her husband."

"And in very rapturous terms, too, I can assure you, mademoiselle," said Belinda; "though I must

say, now I have the pleasure of seeing you, that the praises lavished upon your beauty were richly deserved. And if your looks don't belie you, you must be quite as amiable as you have been represented."

"A truce to this nonsense, Belinda. You'll turn her head," observed Lady Catherine. "She doesn't know you as well as I do."

"She will know me better by-and-by, I hope," observed Belinda. "Can't you guess who wrote the letter?" she added to Colombe, who blushed deeply.

"I can," interposed little Kate. "It was Mr. Evelyn Harcourt."

"Quite right, my dear, it was Mr. Harcourt," replied Belinda, smiling. "I must explain to you, mademoiselle," she added to Colombe, "that Evelyn is my husband's cousin. We have seen him since our arrival in Paris. You won't wonder, now, that I take an interest in you. I hope we shall be great friends."

“I hope so indeed, madame,” replied Colombe, timidly.

“Now I have found you again, after all these years, I shall not speedily part with you, depend upon it, Belinda,” said Lady Catherine. “You and your husband must take up your quarters with us. We have plenty of room for you in this large hotel. Mr. Law, I am sure, will second my invitation.”

“That I do, with all my heart,” he rejoined. “You must come, Carrington. Neither Lady Catherine nor myself will take a refusal. My house, my servants, and my carriages shall be entirely at your disposal, and you shall do just as you please. I can’t promise you much of my own company, for, as you may suppose, I am greatly occupied, but I will give you every moment I can spare. You, too, Sir Harry,” he added to Archer, “must consider my house your home during your stay in Paris.”

The invitation was far too agreeable to Belinda

and her husband to be declined, and Lady Catherine and Law were proposing various plans for the amusement of their friends, when Thierry entered, and said that two gentlemen begged an interview with Mr. Law.

“I am unable to give their names,” added Thierry, “but one of them says he is a Scottish kinsman of monseigneur.”

“A Scottish kinsman, eh!—a cousin twenty times removed, in all probability,” laughed Law. “Well, admit them.”

Shortly afterwards, Thierry ushered in two personages, in the foremost of whom—a plainly-dressed gentleman of unassuming manner, and with features that proclaimed his Scottish origin—Law recognised the Earl of Islay.

“Ah! my dear lord!” exclaimed Law, stepping forward to greet him. “This is a most unexpected pleasure. I had not heard of your arrival in Paris.”

“It is scarcely likely you could have done, sir,”

replied the earl, "for I have not been here many hours. Like all the rest of the world, I have come to pay my court to you. But allow me to present my friend, Lord Belhaven, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. His lordship is charged with a special mission to you," he added, as bows were exchanged between Law and the handsome and distinguished-looking nobleman in question.

"A mission from his royal highness, I presume," observed Law, with a smile. "I can guess its import. If I am not mistaken, the Prince of Wales desires to speculate in our funds. We have emissaries from every sovereign, and every potentate, in Europe, but it is clearly impossible to oblige them all."

"I will not affect for a moment to disguise the object of my mission to you, Mr. Law," replied Lord Belhaven. "As you have surmised, it does relate to the *Compagnie des Indes*, in which his royal highness is desirous of purchasing shares."

“I felt sure of it,” thought Law. “I need scarcely say I shall feel proud to afford his royal highness all the facilities in my power. The present subscription is quite full, but the prince shall have some of my own shares, and on the next issue I shall be able to do better for him.”

“Your compliance with his wishes will be duly appreciated by the prince, Mr. Law,” said Lord Belhaven; “and you may rely upon it, he will not forget the obligation. I have some other matters to say to you, but these must be deferred to a more convenient opportunity.”

The two noblemen were then presented to Lady Catherine, and while they were talking to her ladyship, Law asked Belinda if she had any curiosity to visit the Rue Quincampoix, informing her that the young king was going there privately on the following day, in company with the Regent.

“If you would like to go, Lady Catherine will take you,” he added. “I shall be in attendance upon his youthful majesty, and may, perhaps, have

an opportunity of presenting you to him. But that I cannot promise. I *will* promise, however, that you shall be in the same house with him."

"Oh! that will be delightful," cried Belinda. "I am dying to see the Rue Quincampoix. I am told it is the most extraordinary sight in Paris—that the crowds are wonderful—and it will be an additional gratification to see the young king. I hope Charlie and Sir Harry may be of the party."

"Of course," replied Law. "I don't mean to separate you from your husband, and Sir Harry is naturally included in the arrangement."

Hearing what was said, the Earl of Islay remarked that the temptation was so great that he would venture to ask Lady Catherine's permission to join her party.

"Oh! by all means," replied she, "and I trust Lord Belhaven will likewise favour us with his company."

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure," said his lordship, bowing. "I am as curious as all the

rest of the world to see the famous Rue Quincampoix, and shall be delighted to go thither under such favourable circumstances."

Just then Thierry entered, to inform his master that the carriage was ready, whereupon, apologising to his friends for leaving them, and explaining that he had to attend a meeting of the directors of the Company at the Hôtel de Nevers, Law quitted the room.

As he descended to the vestibule, one of the Swiss porters informed him that a carriage with a lady inside it—"a middle-aged lady," said the Swiss—had been standing near the porte-cochère since an early hour in the morning.

"I have peremptorily refused the lady admittance," said the Swiss; "but she is there still. Her manner is so strange, that I think she cannot be in her right mind."

On hearing this, Law went to the gate. The Swiss porter's information proved correct. A handsome carriage, provided with a pair of fine

horses, was standing at a little distance from the entrance of the hotel. Inside it was a lady, richly dressed, but with no pretension either to youth or beauty. Her features were quite unknown to Law. No sooner, however, did he show himself, than, being descried by the lady, she thrust her head and shoulders out of the carriage window, and screamed to the coachman,

“There is M. Law! Don’t you see him? Do as I bade you, drôle!—quick!—quick!”

Upon this, to Law’s infinite surprise and consternation, the coachman lashed his horses furiously, and driving the carriage against a high stone placed at the edge of the pavement near the entrance of the porte-cochère, instantly overturned the vehicle.

Law flew to the poor lady’s assistance, and succeeded in extricating her from the carriage, which luckily had not sustained much damage, and was soon set right by the Swiss porters, who now rushed forth.

Meanwhile, after conveying the lady into the vestibule, and offering her a seat, Law inquired with much solicitude whether she had sustained any injury, upon which she replied that she was only a little shaken.

“To confess the truth, M. Law,” she added, “I have tried in vain to obtain admittance to you, and so was obliged to have recourse to this stratagem. I hope you will pardon me, and let me have fifty shares.”

“Well, madam,” replied Law, laughing, “since you have incurred all this risk, you shall not go away empty-handed.”

And taking out his porte-feuille, he gave her the shares she required.

JOHN LAW.

VIII.

THE HÔTEL DE LOUISIANE.

NOON, and the Rue Quincampoix at its height.

From the iron grille at the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, where persons of quality were alone admitted, to the gate at the Rue-aux-Ours, where the commonalty entered, every inch of ground was occupied—the crowd, as usual, being composed of all ranks of society, mingled together without distinction.

An astounding hubbub prevailed, above which rose cries from brokers, jobbers, and hawkers that would have been perfectly unintelligible to any

save the initiated. *Récépissés*, actions of all kinds, *Mères*, *Filles*, *Petites Filles*, *Cinq Cents*—all were offered, and all greedily purchased. *Porte-feuilles* stuffed with *billets de banque* were quickly emptied, and often as quickly replenished; but gold was in disfavour, and silver scornfully rejected. Generally the transactions were very noisily conducted, and much wrangling ensued, but all serious disputes were instantly checked.

In the balconies of several of the houses on either side of the narrow street sat well-dressed ladies, who appeared to take a lively interest in the proceedings of the tumultuous crowd below. Some of these ladies had little tablets in their hands, like modern betting-books, in which they entered bargains, and shares were handed to them by the Mississippians with whom they dealt, by means of a slit wand. *Colporteurs* were continually pushing through the crowd, holding up placards, and bawling out *Monseigneur Law's* last *arrêt*. All the bureaux swarmed with customers, and the de-

mand for seats was so great that the lucky cobbler, who had fitted up his little shed as an office, obtained fifty livres for each of his chairs.

A novel, but as it turned out very lucrative, trade had been called into action by the exigencies of the Mississippians. A singular little hunchback, whose real name was Thibaut, but who was nicknamed *Æsop*, had made a good deal of money by selling pencils and pocket-books, when the idea occurred to him to turn his rounded shoulders to account, by offering them as a table to those who desired to note down their operations. At first the astute hunchback was content with a single livre for this accommodation, but he speedily raised his terms, and in the end realised 150,000 livres by the business. Little *Æsop*'s success naturally excited rivalry, but the only person who could compete with him was an old soldier, named *Martial*, remarkable for the breadth of his omoplate.

All the cafés and other receptacles were thronged. In the *Hôtel de Louisiane*—as the principal tavern

in the Rue Quincampoix was denominated—in a room on the rez-de-chaussée, the windows of which looked upon the street, on the morning in question sat three gaily-attired Mississippians. The remains of a déjeuner à la fourchette, served at the rate of three hundred livres a head, intermingled with three or four empty bottles of champagne and burgundy, lay before them on the table. They were now assisting digestion with fragrant coffee from the Ile de Bourbon, and if smoking had been in vogue as in our own days, no doubt each galliard would have had a cigar between his lips. The three Mississippians were the Comte de Horn, the Chevalier d'Etampes, and Captain de Mille.

“Corbleu! the Rue Quincampoix is a charming place,” said De Mille. “Here we meet all the pretty women of Paris, and may accost a duchess just as familiarly as a fille de l'Opéra. That's its chief attraction with me.”

“Baste!” exclaimed D'Etampes. “Say what you please, the chief attraction of the street with

you, as with every one else who frequents it, is stock-jobbing. We are all become stock-jobbers, and, till I tasted this new pleasure, I didn't know what excitement really is."

"True," observed De Mille. "Stock-jobbing conducted in this manner, with pretty women for dealers, is my idea of Elysium. I hope it may last for ever. M. Law is a great man—a very great man. We owe all this to him. He has created this wonderful street. He has brought all these people together. He has filled our pockets with money—trebled our means of enjoyment—given us all the luxuries we formerly sighed for in vain. M. Law, I repeat, is a very great man. May he live for ever, and go on perpetually issuing fresh shares!"

"And may we be here to buy them!" cried De Horn, laughing. "What a marvellous invention is paper-money. I'm astonished it was never found out before."

"I never thought I should live to despise gold,"

said D'Etampes; "but I now look with contempt upon a louis d'or."

"Keep your porte-feuille well stuffed with billets de banque—that's the plan," observed De Mille. "But, as De Horn truly observed, this paper-money is a wonderful invention, and its introduction proves M. Law to be a man of real genius. Why! it has made all Paris rich. And as to the Mississippians, their luxury is incredible. If they have the faculty of making money quickly, they also know how to spend it quickly. Talk of the Regent's suppers, they are all very well, but a real orgie can only be given by a Mississippian of the first water."

"If we make a million, as I feel sure we shall, we'll have an orgie worthy of Belshazzar," cried De Horn. "A propos of suppers, how did Cossard entertain you yesterday?"

"Superbly," replied De Mille. "You know he has bought a delicious maison de plaisance in the Rue de Charonne. The house is perfection—

the vestibule painted by Watteau, and every room as exquisitely furnished as a salon in the Palais Royal. The supper was served on a table à ressort, which rose before us as we entered the banquet-chamber. Scented tapers lighted up the glittering plate and crystal glasses with which the board was loaded. The choicest flowers diffused their odours around. Never was there such a repast for luxury and prodigality. Every dish might have been ordered by Lucullus, and the wines were positive nectar. Strains of soft music proceeded from an unseen orchestra, but did not interrupt the conversation. In short, it was the supper of a Sybarite, and nothing was wanting, except a little less restraint, but as M. Law and Lady Catherine were among the guests, the utmost decorum was observed."

"That would not have suited me," remarked De Horn. "I like the abandon of the Regent's suppers."

"I hope Cossard will soon give another enter-

tainment, and invite me to it," remarked D'Etampes. "But all the Mississippians live like princes."

"Of what use is money save to purchase enjoyment?" said De Mille. "Thousands are now living in riot and prodigality who a few months ago had scarcely the means of existence. Marvellous are the changes wrought by the great enchanter at the head of affairs. By a single stroke of his wand he has turned a footman into a lord, and a chambermaid into a fine lady. Lacqueys and coachmen now ride in their own carriages."

"Excusez, mon cher, they don't always ride *inside* them," interrupted D'Etampes, with a laugh. "It is true they have grand equipages, but they can't forget old habits, and not unfrequently mount the box or get up behind. A lady told me that on entering the parterre at the Opéra the other night, she met her cuisinière far more splendidly dressed than herself, and covered with diamonds."

"The freaks and follies of these newly-enriched

common folks are ridiculous in the highest degree," laughed De Horn. "Not knowing what to do with their money, they play at ducks and drakes with it. But let us go out and transact a little business. I must go to our broker, Papillon. I've got some cinq cents to sell. Won't you come, De Mille?"

"I'll join you presently," he replied. "I expect Cossard, and must wait for him."

De Horn and D'Etampes then quitted the room, leaving De Mille alone. Shortly afterwards, Cossard made his appearance, and said, hurriedly,

"Now is the time for the execution of our project. Evelyn Harcourt will be here presently. He has got fifty *mères* to sell. Each share is worth twelve thousand livres, but I have so managed the market that they have fallen to three thousand. Buy his shares at that price, and pay him with *filles*."

"Good. How many *filles* must I give him?"

“Twenty,” replied Cossard. “Leave the rest to me.”

At this moment Evelyn appeared at the open window, and, on seeing him, De Mille called out:

“Bonjour, M. Harcourt. Can we do any business together to-day?”

“Will you buy any actions d’Occident?” responded Evelyn. “I have fifty to sell.”

“They have fallen a fourth, but I will give you twenty *filles* for them,” said De Mille. “Pray come in.”

Evelyn complied, and after a little bargaining the exchange was made. Scarcely was it concluded than loud shouts were heard in the street announcing a change of some kind.

“What has happened, M. Fagon?” asked Cossard of a man who was standing at the window.

“The *filles* have gone down,” replied this individual, who was Cossard’s secret agent. “The market has been suddenly inundated with them.”

“How much have they fallen?” demanded Cossard.

“Two-thirds,” replied Fagon, “and they are likely to fall still lower.”

“I will give you ten *petites filles* for your twenty *filles*, M. Harcourt,” said De Mille.

“That is too much, you ought only to give seven,” observed Cossard.

“No matter—shall we deal, sir?” said De Mille, taking the shares from his pocket-book.

Evelyn assented, and a fresh exchange was made.

“The fluctuations in the market are unaccountable to-day,” remarked Cossard. “I never knew anything like it. Sacrebleu! what’s that?” he cried, as another great disturbance was heard in the street.

“The *filles* are down now—one half,” replied Fagon. “But the *mères* have risen prodigiously,” he added. “They are now at twelve thousand livres.”

“I can't comprehend why they have so suddenly got into favour again,” said Cossard.

At this moment the Comte de Horn and D'Etampes rushed into the room in a state of great excitement.

“Everything is falling!” cried De Horn. “We shall all be ruined. The *cing cents* are down—and so are the *filles* and the *petites filles*.”

“But the *mères* are up,” said Cossard.

“True,” replied De Horn; “but, unluckily, mine are gone.”

“So are mine,” said Evelyn. “I have just sold fifty to Captain de Mille.”

“You shall have ten of them back again for twenty *cing cents*,” said De Mille.

“Agreed,” cried Evelyn, handing him the twenty shares, and receiving ten others in return.

While De Horn was declaiming against the stock-jobbers, to whose discreditable manoeuvres he attributed the extraordinary changes that had just occurred, Fagon called out,

“Another change, messieurs!”

“What now?” demanded Cossard.

“The *mères* are declining again, and the *vingt cents*, the *filles*, and the *petites filles* are rising.”

“Diable!” cried Cossard. “You are unlucky to-day, M. Harcourt.”

At this moment, the attention of all the party in the room was attracted by a brawl in the street, and rushing to the open window to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, they found that a conflict was taking place between two richly-dressed individuals, who were defending themselves with their canes against half a dozen assailants, some of whom had drawn their swords. Such was the quickness and dexterity of the two persons in question, who were evidently adepts at single-stick—a mode of fighting little practised at that time in Paris—that they not only managed to keep off their assailants, but, by well-applied blows on the arm, compelled three or four of them to drop their blades. From the wild shouts and

peculiar mode of fighting of the two principal personages in this unequal conflict, Evelyn knew they must be Irishmen, and feeling sure they would be speedily worsted, he shouted out to them to seek refuge in the tavern.

The Irishmen acted at once upon the hint. Clearing off their nearest opponents by some well-directed blows, they rushed towards the open window of the tavern, and sprang actively through it. In another moment the window was beset by a furious crowd, all loudly demanding that the fugitives should be given up to them, while several of them tried to get in at the window. Evelyn, however, with the Comte de Horn and the others, resisted their entrance, and luckily at this moment half a dozen archers came up, and quelled the disturbance.

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C. WHITING, BRAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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